

# GameOn

GAMEONMAG.COM - ISSUE 85

## DISHONORED 2

**MAFIA III**

DETECTIVE CRIME THRILLER

**SHERLOCK HOLMES**  
*The Devil's Daughter*

INSIDE  
22 REVIEWS  
14 PREVIEWS  
& 10 ARTICLES







**W**elcome to the November 2016 issue of The GameOn Magazine! You may have guessed it, but yes there is some more gamescom previews - if we didn't spread them out the magazine would take you six weeks to read! And if you were still reading last month's coverage, think about what you would miss this month...

Our articles span the gamut from Windows Live to Star Trek Online, DLC and comic books - and those are just the ones I wrote. We also have Ethan donning his archeologist hat to look for what happened to Turok, Apothecary tired out the role play portion of DayZ and Anna tells us when we're addicted to Just Cause.

I already mentioned more gamescom previews, so I won't bang on about those other than saying they are by Dom, Gary, Alex and Calum. Next, SphericalCat

cuddled up with Woven, and Apothecary controlled the law in 911 Operator while Matt was a LawBreakers. Meanwhile, OWen was an Epic Manager, Steven rode the Planet Coaster and Simon Dreadnought but his own fear.

Topping off this issue, Thomas lost his Headlander, Nerd House was Slain: Back from Hell and Owen was a God Eater 2: Rage Burst. Okay, not all of those make sense, but you try writing one of these! Let me try again; James saw some Shattered Skies, SphericalCat was told to Grow Up, and Ethan reached his Zenith.

Fine, just go check out the contents page, or have a read through the issue. It's well worth the effort. I'll see you next month, wearing a Santa hat. It's almost Christmas!

## THE EDITOR

## Contributors

Editor-in-Chief - Steve Greenfield  
Editor - Andrew Duncan

Games Critic - Thomas Hughes  
Games Critic - Anna Duncan  
Games Critic - Andrew Duncan  
Games Critic - Alex Hamilton  
Games Critic - Nerd House  
Games Critic - Dom D'Angelillo  
Games Critic - Gary Sheppard  
Games Critic - TheSphericalCat  
Games Critic - Owen Chan  
Games Critic - Simon Brown  
Games Critic - Calum Parry  
Games Critic - James Boote  
Games Critic - Steven Dawson  
Games Critic - Ethan Butterfield  
Games Critic - Matt Lorrigan  
Games Critic - The\_Apothecary  
Games Critic - VodKaVK  
Games Critic - Matt Wilhelm

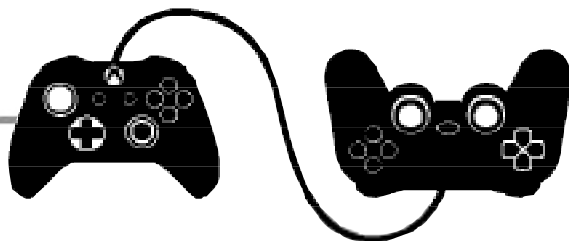




### Whatever Happened To...Turok?

*Ethan wants to know where the new Dinosaur Hunter titles are*

*By Ethan Butterfield*



**H**ey everyone! Has there ever been a point when you're looking through your gaming library and wondered, "Huh, I wonder whatever happened to this series?" Well, I'll be taking a look at videogame franchises and the lead up to their eventually final days. With that being said, today I'll be asking the question: "Whatever Happened to Turok?"

To go back to the start, Turok was a first person-shooter developed by Acclaim Studios Austin. The first game in the series, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, was released in 1997 and was received with enough critical praise to create a healthy

fan base towards the franchise. Riding off the first games' wave of momentum; the sequel, Turok 2: Seeds of Evil, would be released in '98. It would go on to be another huge seller for the developers at Acclaim Studios Austin, resulting in a spike in fans and a spike in demand.

Things started to get bumpy for the developers during the release of Turok: Rage Wars in '99. The game would still garner positive reviews, but was deemed non-canon to the rest of the established story and gameplay was considered lackluster in comparison to the first two games.







Acclaim Austin took this “loss” to heart with the introduction of Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion in 2000. Upon release, Turok 3 hit the sweet spot and was loved by fans and critics alike. Some even going as far to say that it was a franchise best and that Turok had finally come into its own. This victory would be short-lived however with the eventual announcement of Turok: Evolution. Evolution was not only the first game in the series to be released in a two year span, but it was also the first to not be featured on N64. It would instead find its home on the PS2, Xbox and GameCube.

Reviews for Evolution were mixed, with common complaints directed towards a paper thin plot and terrible enemy design. This was a blow for the franchise, having only found critical praise throughout most of its games, with the exception of Rage Wars. With this minor success, it would be another six years before a new Turok game would see the light of day...

With those six long years having finally passed, 2008 rolled around and it was time for a new Turok game with a brand new developer,

Propaganda Games. With no titles under their belt, Turok was a must sell for the team. Unfortunately for Propaganda, although the newest add-on was considered a success, to fans it was mediocre. A run of the mill FPS that had been done before and done better, the reboot to the Turok franchise had made the mistake of incorporating all the clichés from modern shooters of the time.

Although, as mentioned earlier, it still was enough of a success to warrant a sequel. This sequel, however, wouldn't see the light of day and would eventually be cancelled. This would be the end of the franchise for nearly a decade and brings us to where we are today.

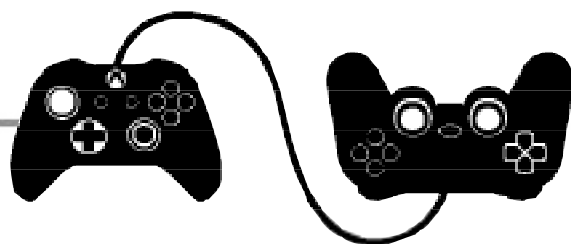
Not a lot of news has followed since then. There was an HD remaster released by Night Dive Studios recently. However, in the months that followed, news of an up and coming System Shock 3 had more than fizzled out a lot of the flare from the HD remasters release. With this being the case, it seems that Turok has not been forgotten, but is in need of a brand new title to bring focus back towards the series. ■



### Getting into Star Trek Online with Agents of Yesterday

*Is the latest expansion to Star Trek Online worth getting in on?*

By Andrew Duncan



As a fan of Star Trek since the early 90s, I had been interested in exploring Star Trek Online for a while. I got into it a little during the Delta Recruitment event back in April 2015, because they said it was the perfect chance to jump in -- Delta Recruits would get more experience, as well as better stuff.

However, I had to reinstall Windows, and then just didn't get around to playing any more, despite reinstalling the game. The save is on Arc Games' servers, so I really had no excuse. I've also kept the game updated by opening it every couple of weeks to install all of the patches, and

as such Steam reckoned that I had 11 hours of playtime logged. It was closer to three...

For those who are unfamiliar with Star Trek Online, it has been running since 2010 and had 11 seasons, as well as some half seasons, and three expansions. It follows after the storyline of the series', taking





## Getting into Star Trek Online with Agents of Yesterday



place in the 25th century after Star Trek Nemesis and the destruction of Romulus as seen in JJ Abram's Star Trek reboot. You're a new recruit for one of several factions (each of which have a bunch of races you can be). The first expansion brought a new faction (and races), and came out between season 7 & 8, the next one was between 9.5 & 10. 11.5 launched just a few months ago, and so it's time for the new expansion.

Once I heard that Agents of Yesterday was coming, I got super hyped. Not so much for the fact the expansion would take place in the 23rd century, and thus the time of The Original Series, but because it involved becoming a Temporal



Agent. The time travel storylines in any season of Star Trek were always highlights for me.

If you're a big fan of Captain Kirk, and his adventures on the Enterprise, then you'll definitely get a kick out of Yesterday. You create a character in 2270, a couple of years after the on-screen adventures of Kirk, Spock and co. Keeping it era-

related, you can only create a Human, Andorian, Vulcan or Tellarite Starfleet character, as the other races now selectable were either not discovered, or not in Starfleet at the time.

Second in command of a Pioneer class vessel, you soon prove yourself enough to captain it, as your captain is promoted off-ship. Your



## Getting into Star Trek Online with Agents of Yesterday

adventures take you to planets visited by Kirk, such as Taurus II and the one that everyone knows from the episode Arena - AKA "Where Kirk fought the Gorn (lizard man)". You also meet some familiar faces, including most of the

crew of the USS Enterprise! Most of the voice clips used are taken from the audio of the TV show, but Chekov and Scotty are freshly recorded. Chekov is voiced by his actor, Walter Koenig, though of course James Doohan understandably could

not reprise his role. In his stead, his son Christopher Doohan puts on a Scottish brogue and does his best Scotty mimicry.

Eventually you come across the time travel elements. Another actor reprising a role from the show, Matt Winston is back as Temporal Agent Daniels, taking place after his time on the NX Enterprise under Captain Archer. He is investigating the Na'kuhl, a species capable of time travel, who have come to the 23rd century.

It's not long before they are routed, with the help of Temporal Agents Daniels and





## Getting into Star Trek Online with Agents of Yesterday

Chekov, and time is almost set right. However, there is one final mission which finds you at the Battle of Caleb IV, the first time the Federation found out that the Klingons had cloaking technology. It was awesome to see something in Star Trek that had only been mentioned in the show. Needless to say, your character winds up in the future: the 25th century. From there you start the main quest line, and are introduced to things such as duty officers and side quests. 23rd century space is only nine sectors, so going from that map to the absolutely huge 25th century was quite a surprise

and took some getting used to, but taking on a random encounter of Borg in my Pioneer class was a real test.

Honestly though, I was happy when I got to swap to a new ship, faster, stronger weapons and shields ... But I'm still working towards getting a much better ship, one worthy of the name Third Street. After all, my crew's uniforms are all purple, fashioned after the Third Street Saints of the Saints Row series -- represent!

The only thing that people might not like about Yesterday, is that you have such a limited

selection of characters to create. The 25th century options number about 30, so being limited to four (although show accurate) species risks putting people off using up one of their character slots if they're only playing as a Trill or Klingon.

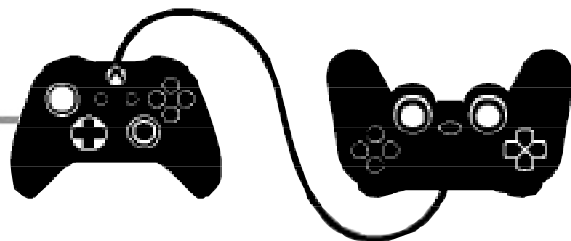
However, I enjoyed it a lot. I'm now in for the player vs environment experience, because damn I've missed Star Trek. I should probably check out the last two movies too, given that Joseph Gatt from Star Trek Into Darkness is also a part of Agents of Yesterday... ■



### So I Tried... Dead Island

*Dead things and an island, Andrew took a shot at it*

By Andrew Duncan



**E**ach edition of So I Tried... I will try a game that I have never tried before. Will I find something new to love? Will I find something new to despise? I'll take a full half hour, no matter how bad it gets or how badly I do, to see if this is the game for me. This time I went for the PC version of Dead Island.

### What I thought it was

An island full of zombies that you have to fight through. I think I remember that it has a funny side, especially as it's mentioned in one of the Saints Row titles. Of course, since there are zombies to fight, it's likely to get my heart







rating. Last year I wrote an article about how horror games scare me too much to actually play them... I'm assuming this will scare me, but damn if I'm going to pass up an opportunity to play a game during its Steam Free Weekend.

### What it actually is

A first-person shooter which really does play better in co-op. At least, from my perspective as a strictly solo gamer who was not looking forward to fighting zombies. The first 30 minutes of gameplay sees you making your way out of your hotel room and doing the first couple of missions. Fetch quests they might be, but at least they let you explore the resort, which has become infested with the living dead overnight. The game will prompt you when there are other players nearby that are at the same level as you, allowing you to drop in and out of play with other people.

### Will I keep playing

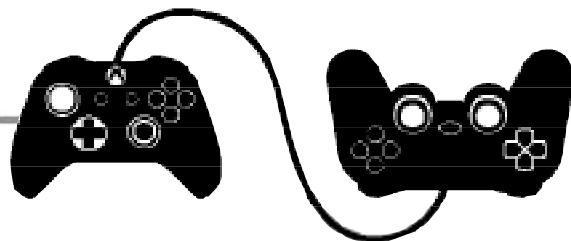
The fact that you first encounter zombies during the day, and it's a bright tropical beach resort, doesn't change the fact that this is immersion of the highest sort. I cringed back from the screen each time a zombie grabbed me. It was slightly alleviated by the fact that someone hit the button to join up with me, but as soon as they wandered off and left me to fend off three zombies which had surrounded me, I was back to square one. Dead Island is a really fun game -- but then there are zombies. When they were far from me, and on the beach, it was fine and I could enjoy chucking things at them: until I ran out of things to throw. Luckily, and hilariously I thought, you can grab any knives you've thrown at them, out of them, and use them to stab it some more. Unfortunately, it's not enough to make me unafraid, so I won't continue. ■



### DLC WTF - Remastered Edition

*Andrew feels there have been enough DLC-related snafu's recently*

By Andrew Duncan



A couple of years ago I wrote about the prices of DLC, in DLC WTF. Put simply, I couldn't understand why Activision was making £60 million from each Call of Duty Ghosts multiplayer map, despite their annual profits going down as a result -- yet Take Two Interactive were releasing GTA V Online content for free and making a mint.

With various debacles going on all over the place, I decided to dip back into the subject. After all, some of you may have read that and

asked "there's been more than one debacle?" Indeed there has, dear reader. Funnily enough, happening in close proximity to one another...

The most recent one that has people riled up is the DLC for ARK: Survival Evolved, titled Scorched Earth. The game is still in Early Access and reportedly has bugs and missing features that mark it as far from release. The developers decided it was a great idea to create an entirely new area, with new creatures and items, and release it to compliment the main game. The







base game is £22.99 and Scorched Earth is £14.99, which is cheaper than getting up to date on World of Warcraft. Of course, Blizzard have actually released them out of beta...

The game was due for full release in June 2016, but one of the developer's old employers decided that the work was done in contradiction to a non-compete which he signed. It was settled out of court for \$40 million. This is no small amount (unless you release a Call of Duty multiplayer map...), so it would appear that Scorched Earth has been developed to help pay off the millions.

So, at least they have visible costs associated with the DLC which is admittedly a large area, and apparently actually finished. Square Enix don't have the same luxury of having an excuse. Their folly was releasing single-use DLC for Deus Ex: Mankind Divided -- one weapon pack for one save file is £3.99. This is something that the Tales series has been doing since the Xbox 360 though. And, at least, they aren't (yet) charging for costume changes.

Unlike the hundreds of pounds worth of digital fabric that Ninja Team have pumped out for Dead or Alive 5: Last Round. From the low price of £14.99 you can have a full set of specifically themed costumes -- better yet, go whole hog and buy a season pass. They've made it even easier by releasing five of them (only on consoles) with each costing £73.99. Yes, yes that is over £350 for all of the different outfits in the game. So far.

It kinda puts into perspective the DLC (which isn't releasing in Europe) for Gal\*Gun: Double Peace, which costs \$90 and lets you see through the girls' clothing. Or the one for Hadean Lands that is literally just a PDF priced at £26.99.

One game that has had something of an ongoing DLC complaint is Fallout 4. Bethesda announced that its season pass would be increasing in price by £15, six months after the game came out. This was coincidentally announced when they released the news of what some of the DLC would be. With the release of Nuka-World, the final DLC for Fallout 4, you only have to look at Metacritic to see that the critic scores







have been middling at best, and only the first couple of DLC have better than Mixed Steam user reviews -- hardly an inspiring sight to behold. I was certainly disappointed that there were only two new story additions, compared to the four from each of the past two games.

Just Cause 3 also had an iffy season pass -- its Air, Land & Sea Expansion Pass recently wrapped up and received a similar reception. In fact the Bavarium Sea Heist DLC only has a single critic review -- and it's the one I wrote myself, with the one before that only having two critic reviews! In all, it wasn't a great season pass, and it appears that the majority of critics didn't see it as worth their time from the content of the first part.

Sometimes, however, the controversy doesn't relate to the content of the DLC. Batman Arkham Knight was released pretty much broken on PC -- so much so that they pulled it from sale on Steam as well as other sites. It spent something like

eight months being seemingly completely remade before it was released back on sale, which meant that whichever team was working on the season pass content was otherwise busy. The game and season pass both went back on sale, not that it was too well received with complaints of not being worth the money, or having too many skins and not enough long story missions.

With all of these, you may wonder why people still buy DLC -- it's going to be okay at best, and a joke at worst. Special editions that don't come with the actual game are another topic I could talk about for a few paragraphs, showing that it's not always the downloadable content that you have to watch out for, and I haven't even mentioned microtransactions.

No doubt there will be another DLC article in my future, but don't worry I won't make you preorder it... ■

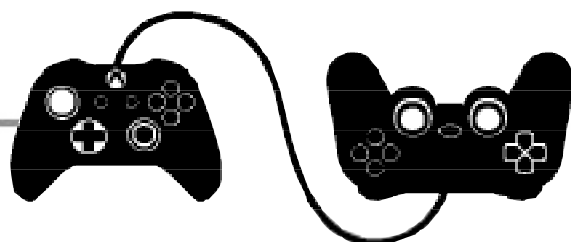




### Battlefield 1, the Colonial Soldier and Historical Whitewashing

*Alex has opinions about people's opinions on white washing*

By Alex Hamilton



*Note: A huge thank you to Reddit user LitZippo for their /r/BadHistory thread on the matter, which inspired this article. I suggest you check it out.*

Okay, so I've written about Battlefield 1 and historical accuracy before. But there has been a growing number of complaints about the game – very specific complaints – prior to its release that I feel need to be addressed. WW1 is a conflict that is continuously misremembered by people and is mired in tropes like ignorant generals, pointless battles and a focus on the Western Front. While these irk me,

the complaints emerging about Battlefield 1 adding “too many” people of colour to the game has made both my historian's brain and writer's fingers itch. I'm going to warn you here: there's a lot of history and not a lot of game in this article, so if that isn't your thing feel free to back out now. Similarly, before we jump straight in, it needs to be said that the reactions discussed in this article are mainly to a map set in the African theatre of war – we have no idea what the in-game character demographics might be for battles set on mainland Europe. Still with me? Good.





### BATTLEFIELD 1



The Great War is a conflict that is shamefully murky in the minds of many people in the modern era. Despite its devastating imprint on the national consciousness of Europeans, most Americans (and the newest generation of Europeans, too) seem to not know too much in detail about the war – something that can lead to drastic misconceptions, especially when it comes to the combatants.

In case you were unaware of the issue, posts on social media sites and image boards like Reddit have attempted to point out how “hilarious” and “politically correct” it is that there are a number of black and Indian soldiers in the

British and Ottoman forces in the Battlefield 1 alpha and beta stages. People have been claiming, among other things, that the Western Front (and I’m using this as a catch-all term for battlefields in which the western powers fought) was a “white front” and that colonial troops played only a minor role. Some added that it’s disrespectful to “real” black regiments like the Harlem Hellfighters to “randomly” scatter black troops throughout other factions. Others have said that since the Hellfighters were fighting for “liberty” and “freedom” it demeans their sacrifice, obviously not knowing that the Hellfighters came from an America deep in the Jim Crow era and were at times

## Battlefield 1, the Colonial Soldier and Historical Whitewashing

loaned to the French so that other American troops didn't have to interact with them.

Let's just chuck some numbers out there for you to chew on. The British Expeditionary Force fielded some 70,000 at the start of the war. The Indian Army, which rose in support of the Empire, called on 150,000 volunteers immediately – out of a total of 240,000. By the war's end 64,000 would have died. Around the Belgian town of Ypres, one of the bloodiest sections of the Western Front, the line was held by Indian regiments backed up by some 37 battalions of colonial French troops. The French deployed some 450,000 of these soldiers over the course of the war, of which just under 200,000 lost their lives. 100,000 colonial troops died fighting on the side of Germany, too, from Rwanda, Cameroon and Namibia. Unfortunately, it's difficult to get figures on British colonial losses as they're added to the Empire's overall total of 744,000.

Reddit user LitZippo, in their thread on the matter, adds that when you google "WW1

soldiers" to prove your point about them being white in the majority, the images you see are just of front line soldiers – "a tiny proportion of the huge [war] machine that operated in the theatre".

"Ironically," they continue, "the Western Front during those four years of conflict was probably the most ethnically diverse place on Earth at that time." Muslim prayers were heard in the fields of Flanders and Indian soldiers observed Eid before sitting down to celebrate with their comrades of Buddhist and Muslim faith. Ramadan and the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi were marked in the trenches. A Chinese labour force 100,000 strong entertained troops behind the lines with displays of martial arts and dragon festivals.

Historian David Olusonga, writing about the period, says: "By the time the manoeuvrings of 1914 had fizzled out and the Western Front had stabilised, the fantasy of "The White Man's War" had, like other assurances of the war, been exposed as naïve ... The Great European War – as it was then still called – became the greatest employment opportunity in history. Hundreds of thousands of men, from some of the most beautiful lands and islands on Earth descended upon Flanders and Northern France. They came from Bermuda, Macedonia, Malta, Greece, Arabia, Palestine, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, Vietnam, Fiji, the Cook Islands and the Seychelles."

LitZippo draws upon another powerful piece of evidence – the Halbmondlager – a German prisoner of war camp which housed 5,000 captured Muslim prisoners and was even part of a German High Command plot to convince





## Battlefield 1, the Colonial Soldier and Historical Whitewashing

Muslim units to declare Jihad on the Empire and fight with the Central Powers. The first mosque constructed in Germany was built in the camp's grounds. A propaganda book published by the Germans during the conflict named "Our Enemies: 96 character heads from German prisoner of war camps" shows the faces of men captured during WW1, and is stark evidence as to the diversity of men on the front.

"This problem is really a bigger one than a video game," concludes LitZippo, and I agree. DICE has increased the number of black and Indian characters in its title as much to appeal to its audience as to reach a level of historical accuracy. To call the inclusion of non-white combatants in a game set in one of the world's great melting-pot events "inaccurate" or "political correctness gone mad" is a stark symbol of historical whitewashing, something that has plagued the Great War since its last shot was fired. "It's no

surprise or secret that the contributions and sacrifices [of] many colonial soldiers are forgotten and overlooked," adds LitZippo. "It's downright dishonest to try and claim that the Western Front was a theatre only fought by white Europeans."

Now we get onto something a bit more videogame-y. What can DICE do to combat this kind of view? I'm hoping that on release the game will come with an expansive bank of information on the conflict – on the battles it is purporting to convey and of the forces involved. If they can find the time to partition off both the French and Russian factions as DLC then they have the time to add a small wiki or tooltip for each soldier type, map and weapon. Battlefield 1 is a unique vector that can be used to teach people about a war that is slipping depressingly into the fog of the past, obscured by hearsay and urban legend. I hope DICE can make the most of it. ■

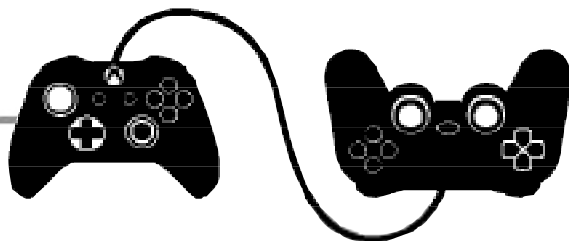




### 6 Comic Characters That Need a Videogame

*Wearing his cape, Andrew tells us which comic characters should have a game*

By Andrew Duncan



Many moons ago, comics were seen as a pastime solely for children. And what else did kids love? Comic books! So, of course, Nintendo and SEGA were happy to publish all manner of game based on the various crime fighters. The X-Men, Captain America, Superman and Batman...

Of course, in recent times not much has changed -- except it's only the most popular characters that get games. Spider-Man and Batman are the main ones, as they are Marvel and DC favourites -- and given TT Games' reluctance to make a LEGO DC Superheroes (instead of sticking it as a subtitle to the LEGO Batman series), is perhaps the only character Warner Bros. think the public recognises. There are loads of The Walking Dead titles, but let's focus on superheroes.

If you check out the Wikipedia list of games based on DC properties, there's only 13 games since the 1980s that didn't have either Batman or Superman in them. On the Marvel list I lost count at 30 when not including any game featuring Spider-Man or the X-Men -- and I even discounted the Men in Black (of which there



## 6 Comic Characters That Need a Videogame

are a surprising number). Despite Activision desperately remastering the Marvel properties they still have, and Warner Bros. being unwilling to publish anything that doesn't have Batman in it, I'm still going to list the comic characters that need to be represented in videogames.

### The Flash

Forensic scientist Barry Allen was hit by lightning and doused in chemicals, turning him into the fastest man alive. It may be a bit of a cheat, as he's had two videogames of his own, and given the popularity of the TV show. To be honest it's surprising that they haven't cashed in, given the two seasons so far having garnered more viewers on average than any of the five seasons of Arrow (the show which birthed it)... I've always been a fan of fast characters (Sonic The Hedgehog...), and

Flash is definitely my favourite DC Comics A-lister. It needs to be an open world, along the lines of The Amazing Spider-Man titles from a few years ago -- whilst travelling around Central City, stop crimes in progress. There could even be parts where you need to assume the role of forensic officer Barry Allen to aid with investigating crimes. There is footage of a cancelled Flash title from Brash Games around on the internet, so we can hope that someone else will pick it up someday...

### Booster Gold

Former athlete Michael Carter travelled back in time to make his fortune using future tech to be a superhero. By far my favourite DC hero, this would be the easiest storyline to work out. Given the nebulous nature of the games, there's no actual continuity that they have to follow. The





## 6 Comic Characters That Need a Videogame

game would revolve around Booster needing to protect the timestream -- from his base in the present, he monitors time and has to stop evil time travellers. He wears a suit that has a forcefield and lasers, and a ring that allows him to fly, so it's basically a Superman game without the invulnerability. It's the only way we could ever experience such great comic book moments as that time Superman and Power Girl fought an allosaurus with gatling gun arms. Anyway, there's a movie in the works, so someone get on this.

### Supergirl

The cousin of Superman also escaped the destruction of Krypton, but reached Earth about two decades later. Yeah, another cheat -- last one, I swear -- due to the fact it has a well received TV show. Kara Zor-El would be a much more interesting character to play as, because of

the number of reboots she's been through she doesn't actually have any supporting characters, and you could design pretty much anything around her. The tutorial would feature Superman showing Kara how to use her powers, and the villains throughout would be the same ones that Superman fights (again, she doesn't really have her own...). To limit her invulnerability the story could include the city being shrunk and trapped in an opaque bottle by Brainiac -- no sun would mean no super powers.

### Nick Fury

An agent of the Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division (SHIELD), Nick is a super spy who protects the world (primarily America) from terrorist threats. He's actually the son of Nicholas Fury, the former chief of SHIELD -- but his father's missing &





## 6 Comic Characters That Need a Videogame

presumed dead, and running SHIELD wouldn't be as interesting. Originally modelled on Samuel L. Jackson (and eventually played by him in Marvel movies), the game would involve infiltrating the evil bases of Advanced Idea Mechanics (A.I.M.) to put a stop to whatever they plan. You'd have gadgets, guns and stealth along the lines of the original Metal Gear Solid, and several of the Avengers could even cameo.

### Misty Knight

A former police officer who lost her arm in a bomb explosion, Mercedes Knight had it replaced with a bionic arm from Tony Stark (Iron Man), before starting her own private investigation firm. As Misty has no powers (though her arm does have some weapons installed inside it) the game would rely on your solving crimes for people who come to you for help, though you could still beat up criminals. Think a less car-stealing L.A. Noire -- though stealing cars in the pursuit of justice is alright... right?

### Nova

Richard Rider became Nova when the Nova Corps was wiped out, and he was chosen to inherit the power. Basically a space cop (okay, that's where the resemblance to Green Lantern ends), he can fly and uses the Nova Force to fire concussive blasts and gravimetric beams. The recent version of Nova is a teenager, as Rider died saving the universe, but I'm not keen on the character (and he's worse in the Ultimate Spider-Man cartoon...) so would hope for the original. The game would have to be set in space, as Nova always blossoms when not stuck on Earth, so perhaps

the storyline would revolve around needing to stop the Kree and Skrulls from going to war.

There are plenty of other comic book characters that should have a game, many of which have never even appeared in a cartoon! Although that used to be the case with Deadpool, and look how that turned out. There are also comic companies other than Marvel and DC that have game-worthy characters, as seen with the games based on the aforementioned The Walking Dead and Spawn. It's just weird that only mobile developers seem interested in developing superheroes... ■

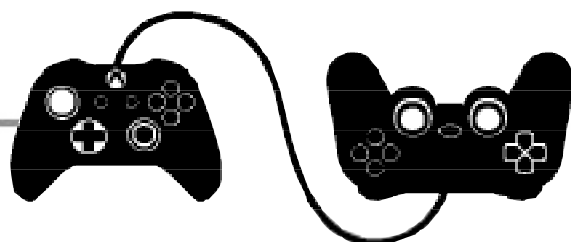




### Are Remastered Games Unnecessary?

*With so many remasters, Ethan voices his opinion on them*

By Ethan Butterfield



It seems in this day in age, remastered titles are flying around everywhere and simply cannot be ignored. With series such as, The Bioshock Collection, Resident Evil 4, even Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare getting polished up. It's not hard to see where all the money is in rebooting.

With that being said, there are some that are for reboots and others that are against it. I myself am a big fan of remastered games from older eras, feeling that it allows the player to experience a title that they might not have been able too back in the day. I know if it weren't for the 'HD Collections' series, I wouldn't have gotten to try my hand at I.C.O or Hitman 2: Silent Assassin.

This brings us to the question at hand, are remastered games unnecessary? A bit of a loaded question, sure, but one I feel needs addressing with the steady rise of HD upgraded games through the past few years. To get right into to it, I believe that remastered games are kind of a wash-up. Here's why:

### Just porting, not remastering:

Marvel Ultimate Alliance, eat your heart out. The difference between actually remastering a game and just porting it is such a major one. To keep running with Ultimate Alliance, the game is fine for it's time. However, time is fickle and leads to innovation. Innovation that would leave games like Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver





## Are Remastered Games Unnecessary?

Surfer, X-Men Legends and the aforementioned Ultimate Alliance in the dust. To clarify, these games were all 4-player, top down, action role-playing games. Games that were understandable then, but when you go back to them you wonder “How did I ever finish this?”. So by porting a game like Ultimate Alliance without fixing or tweaking some things, it’s going to be a poor outcome.

### Justifying the price tag

Not so much an issue for the PC master race as it is for console users, pricing a remastered game can be a tricky scenario. First off, you have to look at the content involved with the purchase. If you were buying, let’s say, Alan Wake remastered and with it you were able to get the game, the two DLC packs and a poster. Would that justify a 50-60 dollar price tag? Depends on your financial situation I suppose. Second, you need to see what games are available, HD collections are especially sneaky with this. So, you’re at your local games reliator and you notice the Killzone: HD Collection. You have the last two games in the series, but not the first. Is it worth it? Both of these things really do need consideration before purchase.

### Justifying the remaster

The last of the three, this one isn’t so much ‘if you should buy the game’ rather than ‘is the game worth your time’. As I mentioned in the opening, The Bioshock Collection was the one of the more recent franchises to get a new coat of paint. However, this raises the of question of “why?” What was wrong with the original series that they needed to bring it back updated? Was it simply to sell to fans with new consoles?

Was it a gesture of love or greed? I think we all might know the answer, but it’s still one of those questions that lingers in the corner of your mind, like wondering if the milk is overdue.

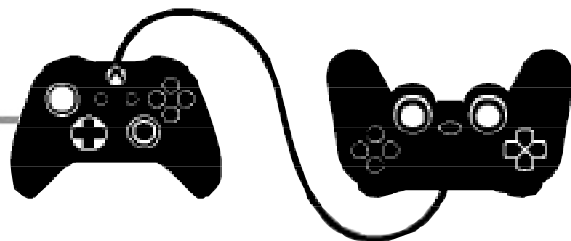
All in all, remastered games certainly have issues that make them look unappealing, but if you wanted to experience the old nostalgia from a game that you used to own, then this spike in HD upgrades is definitely for you. ■



### Apothecary tries DayZRP

*Apothecary decided to put his life in someone else's hands, in the survival MMO*

By The\_Apothecary



Joining DayZRP was a mistake, a very bad mistake. It was a dumb moment which led me to feel obligated to play a game through blood, sweat and tears for nothing in return other than anguish. This mistake is only comparable to me requesting the chance to review Umbrella Corps.

To understand, DayZ itself is a game based from the modification for Arma 2. Whilst the standalone game is still in development, it has been met with harsh criticism and plenty of abuse

due to the various bugs that seem to plague the entire game, such as vanishing bullets, weapons suddenly vanishing from your hands and zombies occasionally being unable to pathfind a way to you despite the fact you are merely waving at them from down the street. None of this is assisted by the fact that the original developer scarpered to make his own game (for those that have VR they should very much consider getting his latest game Out of Ammo, it's incredible!). The sole purpose of DayZ is to survive, nothing else, just survive. Try to avoid the





## Apothecary tries DayZRP

mouths of the wobbly zombie AI and the scopes of the aggressive and kill hungry player base.

After hours of being the victim of the standard KOS (kill on sight) mentality of the DayZ player base, I thought that DayZRP would be a pleasant break from it all. A chance to really progress, develop a character and story without having to worry too much about getting randomly slaughtered.

Boy was I wrong.

Whilst it is true that I died less frequently and even managed to get my hands on assault rifles from time to time, all of it was for nothing. If you don't have a group, you don't survive on DayZRP. On the flip side if something goes wrong for a large group; be it a robbery, a hostage situation or even just a simple discussion about the weather; the ban hammer will crash through the sky in a mighty roar of thunder and slam onto the unsuspecting victim below who was simply minding their own business. There is only one protection against the ban-hammer, only one way you save yourself from its god-like wrath and that's by filming everything. Non-stop, just record your entire gameplay so that when someone does eventually make a ban report against you, you can protect yourself.

In the month I played on that server I went through no less than 30 travelling buddies, half of them were banned and the other half raged quit from the constant robberies that took place. After all, when you have the best gear, you might as well take everyone else's as well. Whilst it was technically against the rules to 30





## Apothecary tries DayZRP

second rob people, that didn't stop it from being a common occurrence so despite the fact I died very infrequently it felt like I had to start from scratch almost every day, on weekends it felt like that every hour! Constant robberies and constant demands for me to put my hands up, even the occasional OOC threat that if I didn't do what they told me to do they would get me banned.

Even if you join a group you have to watch your back, if not more. Whilst you are more unlikely to get a ban report put up against you by a random person if you join a group, other groups will occasionally actively seek to get you banned. I am aware of one situation where one of my comrades in arms had a ban report against him when he didn't value his life by

fighting back in a robbery, said robbery was staged in a such a way that he could only see the one person but the person who initiated the robbery could see multiple others surrounding my friend. Of course, he was banned in less than 24 hours which I personally found ridiculous.

Some people might argue with me on these points, saying that I am just agitated about the community and that it's my personal experience. Whilst this is true, I found my time there to be horrific and stressful, often causing me to sigh as I sat down at my computer and slam my head against the table as I booted up DayZ. You should be aware that I am not alone in that state of mind, other YouTubers who used to record their footage of DayZRP have also started to







feel the same way as I have. With multiple ban reports going up against them from video footage taken straight from their YouTube video, even if it is days or sometimes weeks past the event!

DayZ is an infuriating challenge, but at least you know you can fight back if someone starts shooting at you. DayZRP is a bit more intense and when someone starts shooting at you, you don't first work out if you will win the fight or not, you work out if you will be banned if you shoot back or not.

In short, DayZRP is a highly competitive community where people are more than willing to betray each other and set each other up to get banned, the admins are undoubtedly overwhelmed by the amount of new people that have been constantly joining in hopes

of encountering their beloved YouTube stars that occasionally play on the server and whilst you may think, "Oh I am sure it's just the new people that post all the ban reports against each other." I should mention that friends of three years have posted reports against each other, I should know as I was there when one such event occurred, friendships are cast aside on a regular basis and the mentality of "Well if I can't beat them, I can always get them banned." is prevalent in the majority of the playerbase.

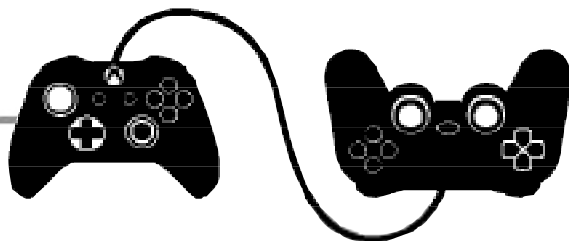
In short, whilst it sounds like a great idea DayZRP will simply result in you spending half your time checking the report section to make sure no one is attempting to get you banned and watching your hard drive slowly fill from the sheer amount of gameplay footage you keep to defend yourself against accusations. ■



### Short Thought: Rockstar Loves Games for Windows - Live

*Andrew thinks Rockstar likes GFWL a bit too much*

By Andrew Duncan



A long time ago there was a Windows service that sought to be the perfect DRM -- as all DRM services strive to do. It was called Games for Windows - Live (GFWL), and it linked your save games to your Windows account as well as acting like an Xbox Gamertag allowing you to keep track of

Achievements, your friends list and other stuff. It also allowed you to buy games, as this was before Windows 8 introduced the Windows Store.

GFWL was basically discontinued back in 2014 when it didn't prove to be the Steam-beating solution Microsoft were aiming for. However, the







way that it was integrated with games meant that, although it's no longer updated, if they required your Microsoft account to do anything (such as save the game), you need to do that. Still.

Of course, some developers have removed it from their titles, such as Rocksteady removing it from both Batman Arkham Asylum and Arkham City. Heck, Nordic Games even removed it from Red Faction: Guerrilla, and they didn't even develop it!

So why on Io did I have to spend a good couple of hours the other night trying to get Grand Theft Auto IV to work on my wife's PC? Why would Rockstar, a company known for putting out a pretty good product on the regular, leave GFWL in GTA IV?

Never mind the fact that you need a Rockstar Club login, and the fact that it will not work at least half the time you try to log in using

it, you actually need it to save. So if you are lucky enough to get it to load -- it kept saying it needed login details for the offline mode, too! -- then you still need a Microsoft login to get to play the damned thing!

Therefore you need to sign up to two new accounts if you want to play the game you bought through Steam, which requires an account or two depending on how you paid. Doesn't that sound kind of insane? Rockstar imposed their DRM over the Windows DRM, on top of the Steam DRM.

Yes, you can get around it with XLiveLess, which bypasses both Rockstar and GFWL DRM. But why should we have to do that? GTA IV came out in 2008, and GFWL was discontinued six years later -- which was over two years ago now. If some fan can create XLiveLess, why couldn't Rockstar have done it? ■

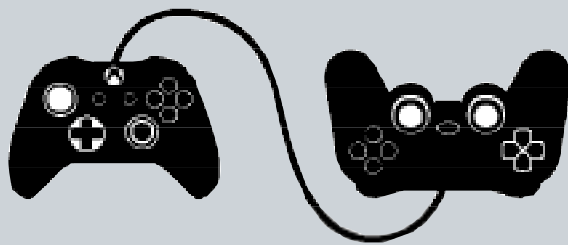
### LawBreakers Alpha Preview

**Publisher:** Nexon America

**Developer:** Boss Key Productions

**Genre:** Action

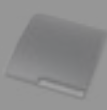
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

TBA

*By Matt Wilhelm*



This past few years we have seen a steady rise in arena and character based shooters ranging from Battleborn to the very successful Blizzard title Overwatch. Now we have new IP LawBreakers from Bosskey Studios that has thrown itself into the ring to compete with the other arena shooters. I played through the majority of the early alpha and

can say that the game has some promise but still has a long way to go in order to compete with the likes of Overwatch.

With only four characters to try out and two maps there's unfortunately not a lot of content to test out, however what I did play through had some promise. To start off, the two maps Promenade and

Grandview while interesting in design aren't exactly spectacular or overwhelmingly complicated. While there isn't specifically anything wrong with the maps, they are fairly generic other than the zero gravity zones. When looking at other games there was plenty of intractable objects and a wide variety of paths that allowed me to take varied paths to the objective, however LawBreakers has some very strict paths that you can take which makes that game grow stale very quickly. I found that while the zero gravity zones provided me with some very unique movement opportunities it actually made all other aspects of the map rather pointless as most of the fun parts of fighting were done in the middle of the map and outside the map was nothing more than a means to the middle. To be honest it feels







weird having a major mechanic like zero gravity only occur on such a small section of the map, although having it on the entire map doesn't seem right either. I think that given some time Bosskey will find a happy medium but for now things just feel very linear with map movement and design.

Moving on to character design, I can certainly say that the game's characters face the same problem that the maps do. At my time of testing the game, there are four characters available and that will hopefully change in the full release because compared to other arena shooters, four is simply not enough. To start the character's base movement speed feels exceedingly

slow and while they all have movement abilities it still slows down the game far too much. Each character has a unique set of abilities that allows them to outmaneuver and out damage their opponent.

Kitsune is the one I had the most experience with so I will begin with her. She is a fast and very mobile melee fighter who excels at close quarter combat as long as she can get the jump on her opponents. She is definitely not suited for facing opponents head on as she uses a pair of katanas and a close range shotgun that require you to be very close to your target before you can deal any serious damage. In order for her to work her way around enemies, Kitsune has a

grapple hook that holds three charges and allows her to swing all around the map or even pull herself towards her target.

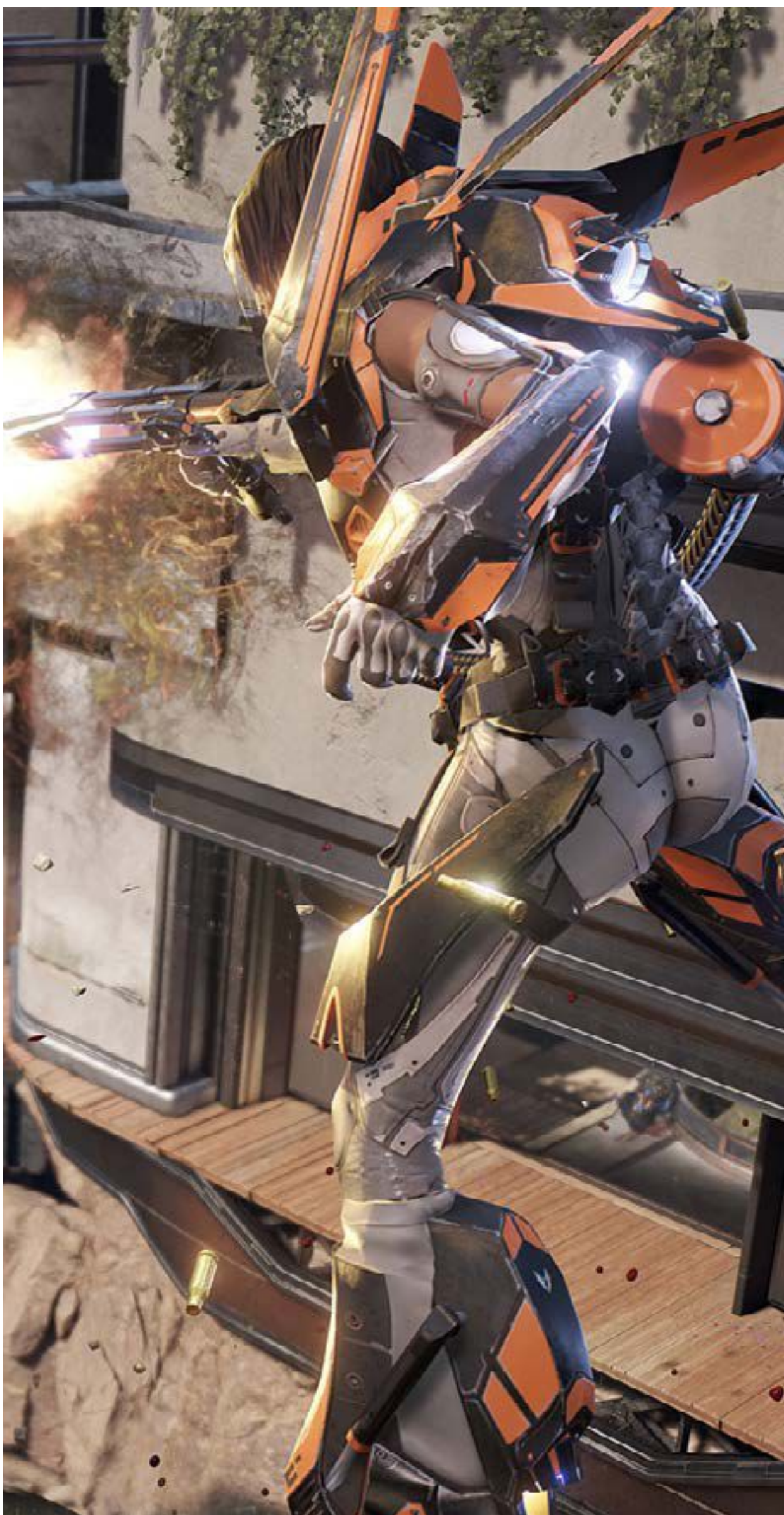
Maverick is similar to Kitsune in that she has an extremely mobile skill set who also have a very unique style of combat. Instead of grapple hooks she uses her jetpack to outmaneuver and out play her opponents. While Kitsune relied on close range and surprise attacks, Maverick is more like a mobile turret using her Vulcan Gatling gun on her shoulder to shred her opponents from up close and at a distance. On top of that she has what I like to call the hulk smash in which she plummets from the sky and deals massive AOE damage to anyone that gets too close.



Breacher is a character that doesn't really specialize in any aspect of combat, instead he's just an all around solid character. He is more suited to running and gunning and definitely better suited for newer players as he plays like most FPS characters. He is a perfect asset for your team when it comes to support and suppression, however overall he doesn't really shine when it comes to killing other players.

Cronos is quite possibly the most interesting of all the characters as he dishes out chunks of damage and can take massive amounts of damage while dishing it out. Unfortunately, he also has little to no mobility whatsoever and therefore can get caught out fairly easily in a 2v1 situation. His rocket launcher when used properly can be extremely devastating and you will find yourself wanting to avoid an enemy Cronos as someone who knows how to play him will carry their team.

Moving on to the game sound I can definitely say that the game has some of the best sounds out here and were very reminiscent of Quake and Doom for me.





When it comes down to firing your guns there is nothing more satisfying than the rounds leaving the gun's barrel, except perhaps the rounds actually striking your opponent.

Now down to the last part, the actual game mode itself, which is in essence Capture the Flag with a unique twist. At the beginning of the match you have to battle in the middle of the map to grab a battery that is then brought back to your base to be charged. Once the battery reaches 100 percent the game is over, however there is one major difference that has some people angry and others happy. If one team steals the battery from the other and its at say 98 percent charge it will

actually maintain that charge and the other team only has to charge it up by two percent. So in a sense you can let the enemy team charge the battery up and then grab the battery and win the game. This may seem like a fun idea in theory, however in practice it is actually extremely aggravating if you can defend a battery for most of the match only to have the enemy slip by once and have them clutch the game. I had this happen to me so many times it actually grew old very quickly. In my opinion they need to have the battery lose charge rapidly when it is disconnected from a station or something along those lines or they will find out very quickly that this mode simply does not work.

Overall LawBreakers has a lot of problems, however it also has a lot of potential. This is definitely a bare bone alpha of a game that requires a lot more polish, but it does show a lot of potential for a more adult themed arena shooter. If they can tweak the maps a bit to encourage out navigating your opponent and add in a significant amount of other characters, the game could have a lot of potential. Only time will tell if Bosskey can create a truly unique arena shooter, despite all my grievances I did enjoy my time with the alpha and will definitely look forward to the changes they make for the beta. ■



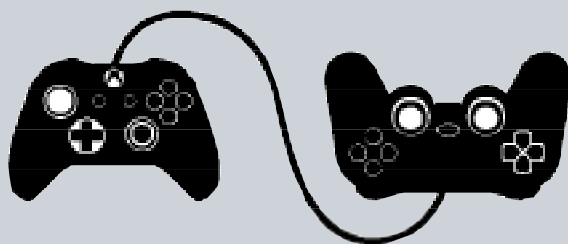
### The Bunker gamescom Preview

**Publisher:** Green Man Gaming

**Developer:** Splendy Interactive

**Genre:** Action

**Platform:** PC



Release Dates

Out Now

*By Gary Sheppard*



So, I'm going to admit to something of a guilty pleasure here. I'm a big fan of FMV games. If you're not of the age that remembers this brief period in the mid-nineties then I shall explain. FMV games were videogames featuring Full Motion Video as their primary, and sometimes only, source of graphics. They were hugely popular around the time the CD-ROM was invented, then died out, largely due to a lot of the games being released at the time being dreadful. Nonetheless, games like *The 7th Guest* and *Mad Dog McCree* are among my favourite games of all time. They were often quite cheesy, with low budget actors in front of unconvincing







green screen backdrops, but for me, they were interactive stories and I loved them.

In 2015, we saw something of resurgence in the genre. We'd seen the return of genre stalwart Tex Murphy in *Tesla Effect* the year before and the breakout indie hit *Her Story* showed what could be done when we brought the genre into the modern age, winning a sack of awards and accolades in the process.

Starring Adam Brown, Sarah Greene and Grahame Fox, *The Bunker* is an attempt to take the genre to a new level, with highly experienced actors at the helm rather than the rag-tag casts that we were used to seeing in

the nineties. It's set in an old nuclear bunker after a bomb has wiped out civilisation.

The big question when it comes out will be, does it add much to the traditional formula? Well, I got to play the first 20 minutes of the game to be honest, it didn't for me. Perhaps some of the nuances of the atmospheric presentation were lost in the midst of a noisy convention floor, but the game didn't grab me as being as good as the stars within suggested. Brown's delivery in particular was quite flat and I struggled to build empathy with his character.

When the final version of the game arrives, I'd love to see a bit more interactivity. There really weren't puzzles in the

game at the point I got to. There was a single instance where I had to find a key to open a door, but other than that, it was very much "click here to advance the story". It was more like an interactive novel than the FMV games of old with their puzzles and branching storylines. Perhaps this changes as you progress through the game, as I say, I only got to play a short amount of it.

We will have a full preview coming up, with a complete review to follow, so it remains to be seen if *The Bunker* is a slow burner or a flash in the pan. One thing's for sure, you'll find out by keeping an eye here on GameOn. ■



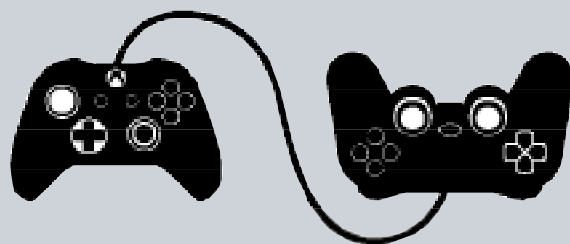
### Ride 2 gamescom Preview

**Publisher:** Milestone S.r.l.

**Developer:** Milestone S.r.l.

**Genre:** Racing

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

Out Now

*By Dom D'Angelillo*



**Y**ou might not know Milestone by name, but you'll almost certainly have seen if not played one of their titles. For the past 10 years, the Italian developers have been the brains behind the annualised likes of the MotoGP series, the Sebastien Loeb Rally games, WRC & MTX racers as well as dozens more. Essentially, if the main character is a vehicle

with two-wheels, chances are, you've played a Milestone game.

It wasn't until 2015 though, when Milestone released the first IP they truly owned; Ride. A bike simulator for diehard motorcycle fanatics. Fast forward to 2016 and Milestone are now in the development process of Ride 2, the sequel which promises to be bigger

and better in almost every way and at this year's gamescom we got a lengthy presentation and a brief hands on demo of the upcoming racer.

In a nutshell, the Ride series is to motorcycles, what Gran Turismo is to cars; as close to the real action you can get without having to step a foot outside. It doesn't just offer







you the chance to jump on hundreds of bikes, but lets you customise, tweak, and change almost every part to suit you and the road you are racing on, too. A 20+ hour campaign is what awaits players jumping into Ride 2 and it's the usual affair of starting with a bog standard motor, and racing your way through multiple series in order to become the best around, but if working your way up the ladder isn't what you're into, there of course is any number of game modes, from single races, endurances and speed challenges.

A racer is only as good as it's roster of vehicles and circuits, though. Without strength in depth it becomes nothing more than a flash in a pan jump in and jump out experience. The guys from Milestone told us that the the original Ride acted as something of a litmus test, gauging what fans liked, loathed and wanted, and it seems like they have delivered on all fronts for the sequel. Now boasting 230 bikes from the off, spread across 19 categories, wannabe riders can ply their trade on the likes of mixed terrain supermotos, feel the thrill on the back of a superbike

or scare themselves silly by reaching ridiculous top speeds on cafe racers and dragsters as well hundreds more.

It's an even bigger victory for those petrolheads obsessed with accuracy though as Milestone has worked closely with a number of bike manufacturers including BMW, Kawasaki and Ducati in order to accurately capture the authenticity, look and feel of the bikes. It's a series of relationships that Milestone particularly pride themselves on, after all, they are the only developer out there who have such an affiliation with bike



racing and its complexities and likeness. So far has that esteem within the industry gone, Ride 2 will also host a series of official circuits, city layouts and races, ranging from the titanic Nurburgring and its and 15.2 miles of twists and turns through German forestry to the fastest road circuit in the world, the Ulster GP. Twinned with favourites such as Monza, Donington Park and the Macau city circuit, Ride 2 doubles its track roster to 30 from the original game making for a much more varied experience.

Of course, it wouldn't be a full racing simulator without the ability to tweak every inch of your bike. As well as the aesthetic side of things where you can change the colour and style of fundamental parts of your bike, there are five mechanical areas to modify. From engine, gears and transmission to the wheels or brakes and suspension, we're told Ride 2 has over 1200 individual parts to pick and choose for your bike, all having an effect of how it feels on the road. It may seem quite overwhelming at first,

but it's as simple or complex as you like it; you'll be able to see how each part affects any number of aspects on your bike, but if you know the exact brake calipers that will give you that extra 10ft braking into corners, you can take that path too. It's as close as you can get to get elbow deep in nuts and bolts without ever having to get up from the sofa.

Jumping onboard for several laps around Monza, it becomes instantly clear that Ride 2 really is more of a sim racer when compared with its







MotoGP brethren. The usual separate buttons for front and rear brake is there in classic Milestone fashion, but it feels like the slightest mistiming can have dramatic repercussions - but that is bike racing after all. Unlike previous Milestone titles, the rider feels much more human, every correction, turn and twist of the throttle sees the rider shift, adjusting

their body weight to counteract the action, it's all about man and machine in perfect harmony as you battle with the impressively accurate AI.

It's a pleasure to see a developer with such strong connections in a particular field branch out and make something they have always wanted to. While Ride was

something of a litmus test, fielding feedback and opinion, Ride 2 looks to be bigger and better in every way. More tracks, more bikes, more licenses, more customisation and more realistic; if you like bikes, racing or simulators, Ride 2 is something you should be very excited for. ■



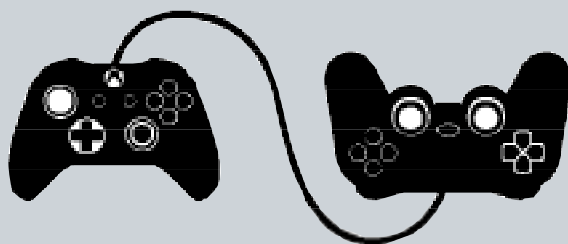
### Demons Age gamescom Preview

**Publisher:** Bigmoon Games

**Developer:** Bigmoon Games

**Genre:** RPG

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

TBA

*By Alex Hamilton*



**M**y first thought when I get a glimpse of Bigmoon Games' adventure-RPG hybrid Demons Age is that it looks like an updated Baldur's Gate. The game throws the player into

the world of Moragon, where demons have infested the land, terrorising its native races and nations. You take the role of a hero with the ultimate aim of defeating the evil incursions.

Demons Age features turn-based battles, where your hero and their companions can use various skills, abilities and magic spells to defeat the gangs of enemies in front of them. Movement is performed via a





grid, with the battles jumping out at the player as they make their way through the medieval isometric overworld. Players will initially start as a convict promised freedom in exchange for completing quests, of which Bigmoon promises there will be a huge number - as well as the game's main storyline, sidequests are scattered throughout the game world via interaction with characters and job boards at local inns.

The player can hire a number of companions along the way to help them battle enemies, though Demons Age brings something extra to the mix - and a feature that surprised me slightly. Your companions are not silent yes-men who will do your every bidding but characters with personalities, likes and dislikes. If you upset them too much they will leave your party or worse - turn on you in battle. We were shown a combat scene where a halfling companion is enraged by the player's continual slaughtering of goblins and goes berserk, immediately making the battle harder for the main character.

Combat in Demons Age is all about strategy, and it seems

that there will be a lot of it as the battles take far longer than what you would expect from your typical RPG. There are very few one hit kills and McGuffin spells that can wipe out entire enemy teams. The player has to be smart, skillful and have the ability to play their cards right in order to progress. The AI in the game will also bog the player down in battles if they're too noisy when traversing dungeons or too visible in sneaky locations.

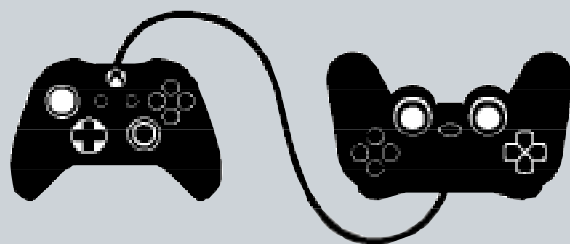
Demons Age, despite its isometric perspective, is a good looking game. The lighting and atmospheric touches that Bigmoon has put work into really pay off - much like another of their titles, Syndrome, the lighting helps to give otherwise dull backdrops like inns and caves depth and character. With the game still in development and a release slated for the end of 2016 or Q1 2017, there are some features that still need ironing out and a few textures out of place or covered up by placeholders at the moment, but the game looks like one that isometric RPG fans should add to their collection. ■





### SpiritSphere Preview

**Publisher:** Eendhoorn Games  
**Developer:** Eendhoorn Games  
**Genre:** Sport  
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Steam Early Access)

*By Thomas Hughes*



SpiritSphere is a 2D, 16 bit inspired hockey game developed by Eendhoorn Games, think Zelda: Link To The Past meets tennis and you won't be too far away from the what the product is. I do feel the need to stress that the game is currently in Early Access, the version I previewed was in beta; so the game does not currently represent the full product.

We've all played air hockey right? There's always one in your local cinema, and definitely one in every arcade. Those little noisy flat tables that endlessly clink are friendship ending monsters. Why you ask? Those things can turn the closest of friends into the most competitive people you've ever met, and that is pretty much the concept of SpiritSphere.

You and three other pals can battle it out in a selection of Super Nintendo inspired arena's, adding various modifiers if you wish. On top of this, a few of the arenas have their own rules, with some involving enemies and others give you a chance to increase your score based on where the sphere ends up behind your adversary. There's also a single player mode where







players can battle against the AI, although this quickly becomes monotonous.

A big chunk of what the game offers really does revolve around couch multiplayer, so it's hard to recommend if you're purchasing it to play on your own. There will likely be an expanded single player further down the line as what's on offer right now is very bare bones. The only reason to play the single player is collecting the in-game currency, which can be used at the sphere fountain, chucking 100 coins in at a time gives you a random chance to earn a new sphere - new spheres essentially act as modifiers, which change gameplay ever so slightly.

The game's controls can feel a little rigid at times, but this might be more to do with the game design itself given the fact Eendoorn Games are going for a specific gameplay feel. There are three buttons, one to hit the sphere, another one that is a charge hit, adding a slight spin to the ball, and a roll button. All three can be used in mix of ways, adding variations on how to hit and move the sphere. Annoyingly, the AI always seems far more mobile than you, they are often able to zip from one side of the arena to the other, hitting your ball back with no difficulty whatsoever.

I've got to talk about how close some of the assets look to Link To The Past and Link's Awakening, it's cool to

take inspiration from title but they look a little too close for my liking. I do wonder what Nintendo would think if they came across it, they can be pretty darn spiteful with the DMCA Takedowns. Having said that, the game does look great: a true ode to the SNES era of gaming, one that resonates with my inner 90s child.

As it currently stands, SpiritSphere is pretty bare, but there is definitely solid foundation for what could be a great game in the future. From what I can tell the developer is regularly updating the game and intends to support it in the future. I feel the game would also majorly benefit from some online multiplayer options as well, so here's hoping! ■



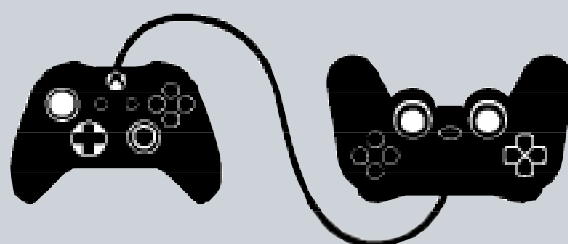
### Epic Manager Preview

**Publisher:** ManaVoid

**Developer:** ManaVoid

**Genre:** RPG

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Steam Early Access)

*By Owen Chan*

**E**pic Manager is a roguelike with D&D 4X (eXpand, eXplore, eXploit and eXterminate) elements that implements an FTL vibe that creates what could be a potentially interesting game, as long as the RNG doesn't ruin you in the first couple of turns.

The game will randomly generate the map and heroes, meaning you could have a

great starting hero or a start where certain tiles are better than others depending on the build you want. Whilst some games will throw full on random generation to practically everything, the game's use of consistency makes the RNG not instantly ruin your chances of winning the game. An example is the starting area, you will (from the numerous restarts of the game I've done) have

a castle tile that will be within two to three tiles away. This is great as the game allows you get yourself situated, giving you time to plan on whether you want to start questing or rerolling in order to get better heroes to contract.

Attributes/bias of the heroes for the most part are tiny boosts with some being major hindrances, which the RNG

### Randomized Loot & Rewards







element ruin where someone has a fear of goblins and is great at killing them balances the perks into neutral. Moments like this don't make sense, so the game could make improvements there, but it isn't really game breaking. You have 16 different classes of heroes, with each one having two variants as their starting special moves (I couldn't progress far enough without losing before reaching level 6 to even unlock their next abilities to find out if there are more variations). The variations are nice, but

the ability to pull a mulligan would be nice when deciding on your first hero since some classes are able to stand their ground better than others.

Honestly the art style isn't for me, it's cartoonish and round shapes remind me of a game found on Miniclip and 1Cup1Coffee which I would play during my breaks and lunches during secondary school. Which isn't a disservice to the quality of the gameplay, but the lack of polish in the overall game makes it hard to

recommend the game with a price tag. Part of the issue is the delay between each action such as hitting a button, waiting for the animation to finish and then I can click on the next button. Also, the lack of full keyboard control feels off considering I can hit the number keys for certain attacks but not use WASD or arrow keys to select the target for an action. Rebindable keys would be a nice quality of life addon as would the ability to skip certain animation cycles that last slightly too long for my liking.



# Turn-based Combat





But it's really the core gameplay loop that's really the gem in the rough for me. The writing feels tacked on which could do with some work if the ManaVoid Entertainment wants to develop its lore, such as mini story elements relating to the world of Astraeus which could involve relics of the war that happens before the game or even a new war looming over the horizon and if you're chummy with another guild you team up to face the villain. The combat mechanics are really interesting in terms of team synergy where you're able to store up Action

Points which can be spent using items, attacking the enemy with your regular and special moves which have varying costs. The leveling up system of the heroes help accentuate this idea of synergy, but pulling off some of these synergies can be really difficult, making sweeping certain enemies feel even better (or frustrations). But once they die or the contract expires and you don't give them the money they want they're gone for good, which is a love hate thing for me and since it take so much time to get a great hero and they die instantly after

pouring resources into them it does leave a sour taste.

The random elements helps give the game some life which it lacks with the map being sparse without enemies randomly wandering the world map, and overall I look forward to seeing how the game progresses.

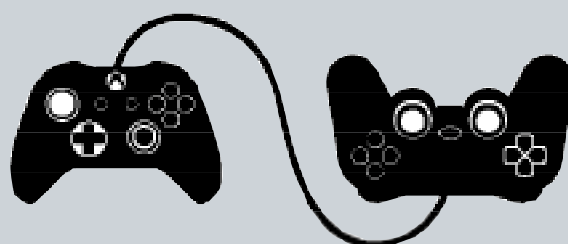
But in its current state with its lack of polish and the pacing feeling sluggish because of the transition time between each action, I can't really recommend it in its Early Access state. ■





### Planet Coaster Alpha Preview

**Publisher:** Frontier Developments  
**Developer:** Frontier Developments  
**Genre:** Simulation  
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
17th November (Worldwide)

*By Steven Dawson*



Frontier Developments, probably best known for creating RollerCoaster Tycoon 3 and Elite: Dangerous are creating their very own theme park management game. One not bound by the directions of a third-party publisher. That game is Planet Coaster.

Currently in alpha, Planet Coaster allows you to play either

a sandbox or challenge modes, with career mode currently locked away for now. The main difference between the two modes that are available is that in sandbox you have unlimited funds and can do what you please, whereas in challenge you have a finite amount of cash and a park to build, without any particular goal. The tooltip for the challenge

mode suggests that it may well change, as it's labeled as a "work-in-progress" mode.

But a theme park management game is for nothing if it doesn't play well, or the actual construction tools aren't up to par. Thankfully, this is where Planet Coaster truly shines. I recall playing the demo of Screamride when it launched





and thinking; "Damn, Frontier have a truly excellent coaster creation model here and I'd love to see it used in a fully fledged RollerCoaster Tycoon title". And well, wouldn't you know it, here is exactly that. Now, I'm thinking that *Screamride* was something of a precursor allowing them to get any criticisms sorted for their building mechanics before announcing this title. The ability to modify the track in any way shape or form you feel really opens up the creative abilities when it comes to making roller coasters. Whilst I do love the original grid-based setup of *RollerCoaster Tycoon 1 / 2*, when it comes to coasters in a 3D space being able to move the track freely - applying exact levels of rotation and elevation allows for the creation of true-to-life masterpieces.

But that's not all, you can terraform the land with a whole host of tools, allowing you to perfect the setting for your coasters. You want to build one that dips in and out of the side of a mountain? Fine, do it. How about one that dives into the middle of a moat-like water surround? Check! When you combine this with the absolute freedom given to

you when placing scenery and other decorative objects, *Planet Coaster* truly becomes a theme park designers dream. Since the scenery objects aren't on a fixed plane, you can spin them round and resize them to your hearts content, meaning you can take your coaster that bounces in and out of the mountain, and theme it in such a way that it looks like a runaway train ride - or that drop into the moat can be surrounded by castle-like buildings and decorations, which really helps bring your parks to life.

I'm most keen to see what the Career mode will bring to *Planet*

*Coaster* as even with challenge mode in place, it can feel a little flat without having a defined goal to work towards. Sandbox usually ends up for me with it being less about the creativity that comes from having to work within a budget to creating ridiculous structures that are so extreme no human in their right mind would want to ride them.

Anyone that enjoyed the creativity of making a realistic theme park with defined zones and stylistic choices should be watching *Planet Coaster* for updates. It's set to release in November 2016. ■





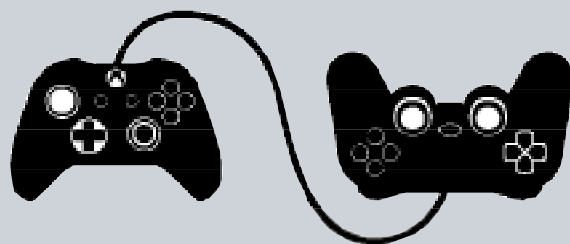
### Dreadnought Preview

**Publisher:** Grey Box

**Developer:** Yager Development

**Genre:** Simulation

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Closed Beta)

*By Simon Brown*



Space is big, really big, so it makes sense to fill it with ships that are also big! That's the basic concept of Dreadnought, a team-based capital ship 'em up from YAGER Development.

Currently in closed beta, Dreadnought is a more thoughtful, slower-paced take on a space shooter. The ships

in the game are large, and as such they take time to pick up speed and manoeuvre, even the nimbler ships have a lot of heft to them. This gives the game a very naval feel with the ships acting more like battleships and carriers than nimble fighters.

This makes positioning and tactics far more important than "running and gunning", being

out in the open is not something you want to happen, inevitable on occasion but carefully weighing up the situation is the order of the day here.

That's not to say there is no action, once an attack kicks off it gets very chaotic, not panicking and using all your ship's abilities wisely can make or break an encounter.





There are a variety of ship types, from the titular hulking dreadnoughts to destroyers and faster nimble corvettes with multiple designs for each.

Every ship fills a different role, from harassment through to sniping and even healing and support. There are a bevy of upgrades you unlock as you rank up as well helping you customise and specialise your favourite ship even further.

As well as your primary and secondary weapons, which can be a variety of laser and missile types, there are also abilities along with active and passive bonuses that you gain from modules. These abilities allow you to perform a variety of actions, from warping out of harm's way and self-repair to firing energy mines and performing a shockwave.

All of these things look to give a wide variety of customisation so you should be able to find a combination that suits your playstyle. Tweaking a ship like the Aion (which is predominantly support in its default loadout) to be more aggressive is a good way to keep opponents on their toes.



In its current form Dreadnought has two game modes, Team Deathmatch and Team Elimination, both five versus five. These both play how you'd expect with Elimination giving you a single life and when the whole team are destroyed it's game over.

However the developers have also recently talked about another game mode, Onslaught, which is an eight versus eight format that also has AI controlled ships on the battlefield. This mode

currently has no ETA but shows promise that more will be coming to the game.

It is also a very pretty game, using Unreal Engine 4 to power the visuals. The environments and weapon effects look great. The game is planned to release at some point in 2016 and based on what is currently available it's definitely worth keeping an eye on if you are looking for some more methodical and thoughtful engagements to keep you occupied. ■



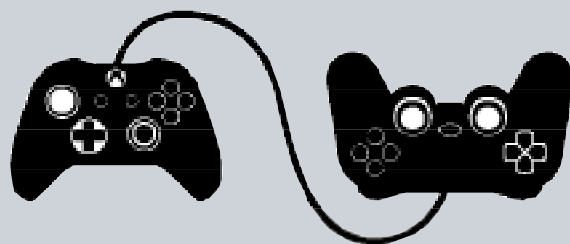
### Five Things You Should Know About Civilization VI

**Publisher:** 2K Games

**Developer:** Firaxis Games

**Genre:** Strategy

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

Out Now

*By Dom D'Angelillo*



Civilization might be the most iconic turn-based strategy out there, allowing you to build, conquer and create the empire you want. It's a perfect respite from the day-to-day woes of real political landscapes and might be the only way we discover how to truly implement Brexit. Luckily then, 2K announced Sid Meier's Civilization VI, the first addition

to the series since 2010, and at this year's gamescom we got a brief presentation on what to expect from the upcoming 'be a politician' simulator.

### Germany Will Be Led by a 10th Century King

As we were in Germany, the big news from Firaxis was the introduction of Frederick

Barbarossa (no, me neither), the newest leader to take the helm of German civilization. A brief description during our presentation, followed by a swift google reveals that Frederick Barbarossa, or Frederick I was the Holy Roman Emperor from 1155, after being elected King of Germany three years previously. He also spent time as King of Italy, where he







received the name 'Barbarossa' which translates into Red Beard as, fun fact, he's a ginger. Of course, as the German leader, Frederick Barbarossa brings with the usual unique U-boat units, but the special ability gifts all German cities with one extra district than their population would allow, an ability, we were told is particularly helpful with the new changes made to city development.

### **Unstacking Cities**

Where previously you could stack all the developments, wonders, temples, markets etc,

into city sized tile, you now build different districts around your city, each one taking up a tile of its own. These then respond to the surrounding area, so you'll want to put your aqueducts next to rivers, education districts by mountains or your military districts near critical points of importance; what this results in is the player putting more thought into where they settle their city, wanting a diverse selection of resources at their disposal. What it also means is that the surrounding civilizations will have the same district diversity, ultimately changing how war unfolds, you'll

want to wipe out their scientific district to stop any military developments first before heading to the capital for glory.

### **Have You Heard The Word of Our Lord?**

Civilization is about the race to conquer the globe, be it through murder, science, money or a combination of the three. For Civ 6 though, Firaxis has introduced another method, the much more peaceful (depending on where you look) act of religious conversion. As your empire expands, you'll eventually create



## Five Things You Should Know About Civilization VI

a religion based on a number of factors, then, through creating religious units such as Apostles or Missionaries, you head into opposing cities to wage theological warfare, explaining why your god can get their god's arse in a battle of scripture and prayer. If you're successful, you'll convert city after city, and like the 'kill them all' method, if enough convert to your religion, you'll be victorious; just be aware, you'll have roaming missionaries knocking on your doors to try to do exactly the same.

### Active Research

Once again, science research is a huge part of Civilization and depending on what you've learnt, your playthrough can change drastically. Now though,

you don't have to simply rely on acquiring scientists to help your development, or finding a supply of resources, now Sid Meier's Civilization VI has placed some of the onus onto the player, everything you do has an effect on your research team, your work puts a boot up their backsides and makes the discovery quicker. Say for instance you place your city on the banks of the sea, you'll receive a sailing boost, and you'll be able to complete the research in fewer turns than without a bonus, warranting a 'Eureka!' pop-up as your team finally discover they can work faster. It's a system that Firaxis described as 'side quest-like' where exploring the world and doing particular objectives rewards the player with quicker upgrades.

### New Art Style

Perhaps the most obvious change coming to Civ 6 is its brand new art style. It has been drastically toned down from the highly detailed and technical polish of its predecessor, and while it has warranted a relatively split opinion, it seems to make for a much clearer and cleaner finish, using bright colours in an almost cell shaded style. It also seems to pay dividends further on into the game as your cities get more and more populated by keeping everything colour coded, matching the in-game menu colour codes for a quick and easy to notice way to conquer the globe. ■









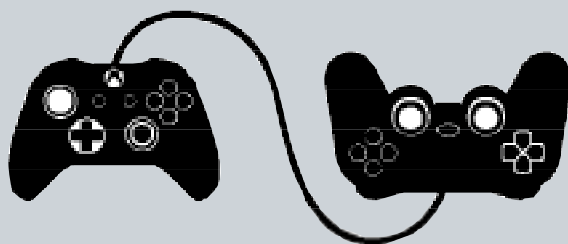
### Mafia III gamescom Preview

**Publisher:** 2K Games

**Developer:** Hangar 13

**Genre:** Action-adventure

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

Out Now

*By Dom D'Angelillo*



It's 1968, you're a black man in a time of civil uncertainty and the city you live in is controlled by the mob. You're a Vietnam veteran, returning home after putting your life on the line, but there's no heroes

welcome on your homecoming. Instead, the Italian Mafia has slain dozens of your peers in a racially motivated massacre, and you feel it is your duty to seek revenge.

This is the world Mafia III sets up for you, and at this year's gamescom we got a hands off and behind closed doors look at a mission in the upcoming open world action game from 2K and developers Hangar 13.







The section we saw takes place on the outskirts of New Bordeaux, the fictional city the game takes place in. Lincoln, on board a small speedboat negotiates around the swampland and heads towards the docks as a 60s soundtrack blares out from the speakers, a combination of upbeat and toe-tapping Motown changes into a more sombre single string Blues melody as Lincoln scans for more radio stations. It's crazy how music can evoke emotions, and somehow the soundtrack in Mafia III manages to reflect the diversity of not only the city, but the gameplay itself, somehow echoing what Lincoln is doing.

As already mentioned, Mafia III takes place in a fictional

reimagining of New Orleans called New Bordeaux, and once Lincoln departed from his boat and headed into the city, we got a better glimpse at what to expect from a bustling 1960s city. Hangar 13 describe New Bordeaux as "a character of its own" in the game, by which they mean it changes and evolves as you progress through the story; you'll see different citizens, gangs and businesses opening and closing depending on who has control. Described as "one of the most vibrant cities in the south, you will notice the strong southern values New Bordeaux has" we were told; a party atmosphere in the cities, while out in the swamplands there is a much more laid back mentality as you go from

former plantations to huge southern mansions. These are two of what we are told will be 10 districts of the world map, all as diverse and beautifully created as the one before it.

It's refreshing to see the Mafia franchise stick to it's roots by remaining in iconic parts of history, basing its story around real people of the time. Sal Marcono for instance, the main antagonist of the game, bears a similar resemblance to Carlos Marcello, who was the leader of the New Orleans crime family in the 1960s; and the mission we saw in action involved Lincoln taking out his accountant, Tony Derazio, a man who uses intimidation and more often than not, murder, to get what he wants.



The cinematic delves into the dodgy dealings Derazio involves himself with, forcing an innocent shopkeeper to hand over protection money (classic mafia) while Derazio's muscle, Dominick, watches on, before being given a task of his own, one that Lincoln will halt on his way to murder the dodgy accountant. With a gritty scene, we not only got to see the beauty of the facial animations, but also of the writing and acting itself; this isn't your tongue-in cheek gangster story, this is a terrifying world where saying or doing the wrong thing

has serious consequences. All the characters seemed truly fleshed out, with that psychotic twist you'd expect from any heavy hitting gangster, except for one omission. Lincoln was surprisingly absent from any lengthy cinematic, and like any classic videogame character seems to be a dull lump of muscle with a lust for blood, withholding any true emotion. Granted, this mission was isolated from the main story and we may discover he has internal issues following his war return, but it'll be a shame to see a supporting cast,

reflecting the city's diversity, outshine the protagonist.

Nevertheless, Lincoln proves to be an agile chap who can handle himself. Opting to take the stealth route on our mission to kill Derazio he moves slowly from cover to cover in the underground carpark of his luxury hotel, Lincoln's approach was accompanied by the sounds of slow jazz, emanating from the guard's break room. Silenced headshot after silenced headshot creates a pile of cadavers, soon noticed





by more cannon fodder, this is when stealth goes out of the window and we get up close and personal. Lincoln brutally disposes of more guards using finishing moves reminiscent of moments from *The Last of Us* in the sense of sheer violence and shock. Kneecapping one brute to the floor triggers a prompt to give him a shotgun blast to head, scattering brains and blood over the room, another, sees Lincoln crashing heads against walls. It's all impressively violent and manages to keep the action fresh and different.

It all culminates in a dramatic shootout on the top floor of the beautifully dated hotel. As shots are exchanged from one side of the room to the other, slowly damaging priceless

art and highbrow statues, piece by piece. What I was particularly impressed by was the diversity of the physics, grenades don't just blow the enemies into smithereens, they sent them flying into walls, knocking paintings of centre or through them entirely. It was such a minute detail, but one that can add so much variety to a play through.

When confronted with Derazio, it's a simple boss battle where the enemy becomes a bullet sponge before succumbing to his injuries. The still tightlipped Lincoln, then kicks Derazio out of the window and walks out, calmly as you like, before the press, gather around the bloodied corpse, 100 floors below reporting on the developing events. This

seems like a something that will occur often throughout your *Mafia III* play through, a way of not only keeping on top of the events in New Bordeaux, but also, on how you approach each mission.

It's all shaping up to be a refreshing approach to the open world genre, we're several years away from another *GTA* and its tongue in cheek social commentary, *Watch\_Dogs 2* is a hipster look at overcomplicated technology, so if it's violence, grit and freedom you're after *Mafia III* is the perfect fit. Yes Lincoln may be another brute in this endless cycle of mindless killers, but with a supporting cast and rich city to explore, this might be the best Mafia inspired entertainment since *The Godfather* trilogy. ■





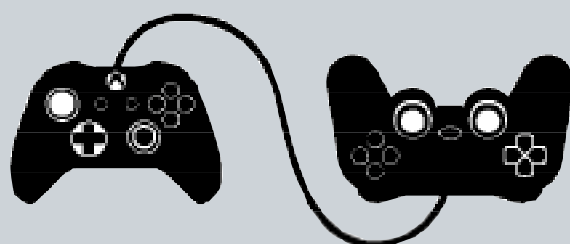
### Woven Preview

**Publisher:** Alterego Games

**Developer:** Alterego Games

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

TBA

*By TheSphericalCat*



There's something special about a game that can tell a story about a woollen elephant, not because that's an especially interesting topic but because it's just so damned adorable. Woven does exactly that, kind of: You play as Stuffy, the woollen elephant, and Glitch, a robotic firefly, in a beautifully stylised woollen landscape,

accompanied by a cheerful piano and woodwind score.

Woven plays like a point-and-click, with the mouse aiming a spotlight from Glitch that can be used to direct where Stuffy goes. All the interaction with the world is done through action menus that reside at the bottom of the screen, which greatly remind me of the old adventure

game interaction menus. This is something I feel isn't done very well, because the mouse is your navigational tool needing to click interaction buttons that aren't where you're wanting to go means that it is easy to click accidentally and move away from the point of interest.

The main thing that drew me into wanting to play this is the







weaving mechanic: Stuffy can be rewoven to have a different body with different abilities. As an elephant, he can stomp, pick things up, jog and push things, and these abilities are split across his body parts. Using a machine that looks suspiciously like a sewing machine, you can change those body parts to another woollen animal once you've scanned them with Glitch.

You can also change the design of your skin for each part of your body to a variety of different designs and colours. There are a few unlocked at the start, but more can be collected in little acorns.

This mechanic was actually introduced as a puzzle, so there definitely can be gameplay reasons to wear different colours. The customisation is very good, with two or three patches on each body part that can be customised.

The story is told through a poem, which only adds to this game's incredible charm. Despite this only being an early alpha build of the game, the story is fully implemented and you can play the first half an hour of it. This is a story about unusual friends working together to help each other, and despite being clichéd it's adorable. It also

looks to have a potentially dark turn somewhere along the line, especially with how the demo ends.

Woven is an exceptionally promising title that is still very early on. It's gone through Greenlight, and has started a Kickstarter. I really enjoyed what game is there and I really want to see where they go with this story, these mechanics and this world. There are some things that need tidying up, but really I don't think it's anything major; just some contextual buttons to replace the currently clunky interaction menus. ■



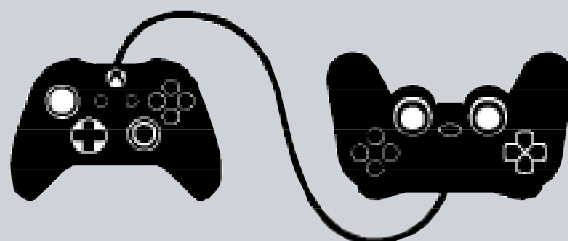
### Yooka-Laylee gamescom Preview

**Publisher:** Playtonic

**Developer:** Playtonic

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One, Wii U



**Release Dates**  
2017

*By Gary Sheppard*

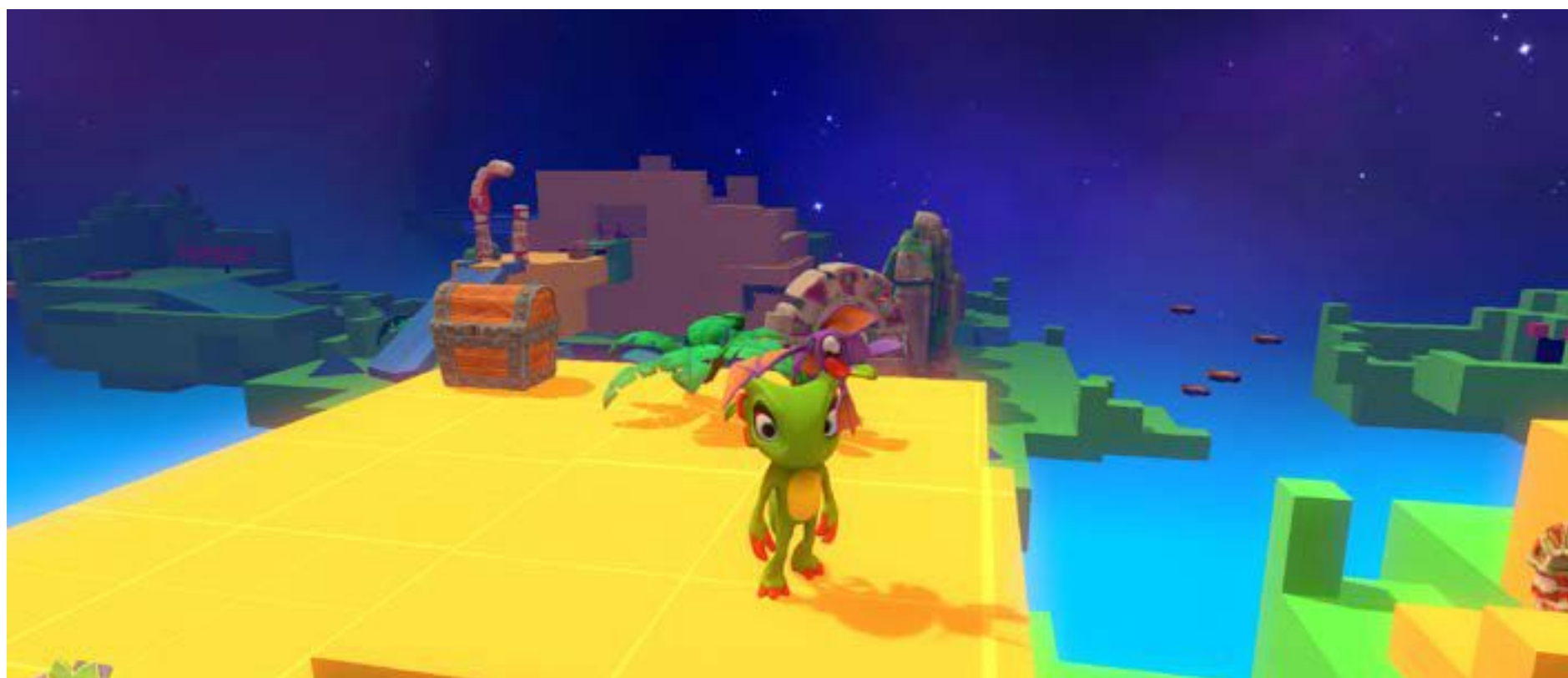


# gamescom

I was quite fond of Team 17's booth at gamescom. Everyone there was really friendly and enthusiastic, there were a good deal of colourful and fun-looking games on display, and most importantly, they gave me the

first proper cup of tea I'd had since arriving in Germany. Cologne is a beautiful city and I thoroughly enjoyed my time there, but the Germans are not big tea drinkers. Whilst they try to accommodate for foreign visitors, quite

frankly, drinking Earl Grey at three in the afternoon is just madness. So Team 17, one of the last remaining British game publishers, came to the rescue with a proper cup of the nut brown joy I'd been missing out on. Yes, it's very old-fashioned,







but so am I, and so, handily enough, is Yooka-Laylee.

If you're not already familiar with the idea, Yooka-Laylee is the debut game from Playtonic, a studio based in Staffordshire, made up largely of games-industry veterans. A great deal of the team were members of Rare before Microsoft purchased the developer in 2002. Rare Replay aside, Microsoft haven't been doing a lot with many of the old IPs of Rare, and so,

eager to create games like they had done back in the day, a group of former employees including Chris Sutherland, Steve Mayle, Mark Stevenson and Gavin Price decided to form their own studio in 2014. The game became one of the most funded games on Kickstarter and has been in development since the studio founded two years ago.

The first thing that I noticed in the level of Yooka-Laylee that I got to play at the event was

that this really is Banjo-Kazooie in all but name. The characters and world are different, but the look and feel of the game is just like it was back in 1998 on the Nintendo 64. It's bright and bold with lots of vibrant colours and stunning looking scenery. In cut scenes, they talk in a gibberish manner similar to that we saw in the Banjo games, and the quirky humour of those games is evoked. It's like those products you see in budget German supermarkets: It's close enough that you know



exactly what you're going to get, but not close enough that anyone could successfully sue.

The game is an absolute delight to play. It has that instant pick up and play appeal that a good mascot platformer should have. There are collectibles as is always the case, but there is a much more grand purpose than in other platform games. Along the way, you will collect "pagies", which are book pages that allow you to expand your world. This is done in a very non-linear fashion; you can expand the level you're currently playing, or spend your pagies on unlocking a

different level. This non-linear way of playing was explored in the days of the N64, but the technology just wasn't there to put it into this sort of scale.

This technological advancement extends further than just the game structure too. The level I played was absolutely massive, and it extends just as far into the sky as it does into the distance. At the higher points, I was seeing a beautiful vista of fully explorable terrain, much more than was ever possible in the days of Nintendo's 64-bit offering. It's a stunning looking world too, full of lush trees, twittering birds and

tonnes of objects with googly eyes, as you'd expect from a game that takes so much inspiration from Banjo-Kazooie.

The title is set to come to pretty much every current platform, so a PC, Wii U, Xbox One and PS4 version are all in development. It stars the titular duo who are a bat and a chameleon. You are generally in control of chameleon Yooka, with Laylee flying slightly above your head. The abilities of each character will come into play as you go through the game, with expected abilities like sonar and colour changing being complemented







by less well known aspects of the animals. For example, before gamescom, I wasn't aware that chameleons could survive underwater by farting giant bubbles for themselves to float in.

It's quite a cerebral affair, with a number of puzzles requiring a few attempts before I cracked them. It's not on a level with The Times crossword or 3D chess, but as platformers

go, there's some interesting puzzles that I saw. I won't go into too much detail to avoid spoilers, but I will say that exploring everything in this vast world will go a long way to making your life easier.

The platforming of course, is there in abundance, but with none of those horrible jumps requiring pixel-perfect precision that were so common in the early days

of 3D platformers. Much like returning mascot platformer Ratchet and Clank, this is a game that borrows all the best elements of the games before it, without bringing back any of the less desirable elements. It's a platformer for the new generation and the old generation alike and as one of the old generation, I can't wait for Q1 next year so I can play more of this. ■





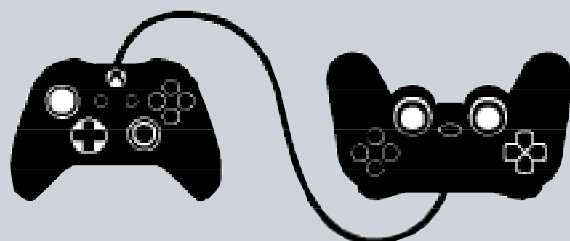
### 911 Operator Preview

**Publisher:** PlayWay S.A.

**Developer:** Jutsu Games

**Genre:** Simulation

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

TBA

*By The\_Apothecary*



911 Operator is not a game purely based around taking the role of a phone call operator, after all, it would be somewhat tedious to be able to do nothing other than respond to phone calls throughout the game.

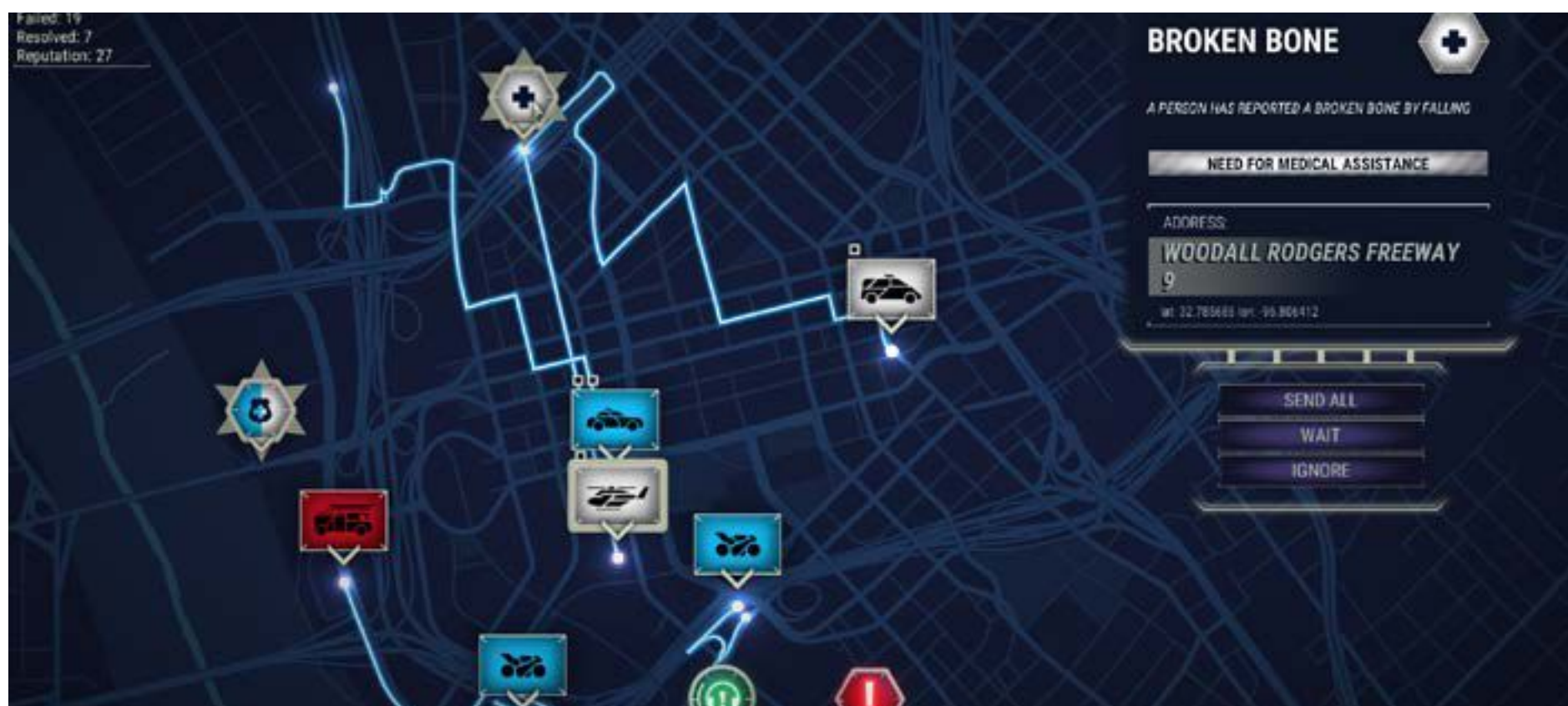
Whilst answering the phone to respond to various emergency calls is part of the game, it is certainly not the only thing you can do. Much to my delight the

game allows you to effectively manage the equipment of various emergency operators; including police officers, firemen and paramedics, as well as assigning them to certain vehicles of your choice.

At first, this was all lost on me, I had no idea what I should equip to who and no idea what everyone should be using! Of course, it didn't take long for me

to start figuring it out; afterall, I don't think a fireman needs an assault rifle and I doubt a policeman would find much use in a fireman's axe and prybar.

The rest of the game is focused around the management of your emergency services, directing paramedics, firemen and police officers to certain events around the map. Occasionally, the phone will







ring, requiring you to respond carefully to the person on the other end. You must find out what is happening, what you need to send and where they are; more than once I have stupidly finished the phone call without actually asking where they were.

As the game progresses, so does the difficulty, with more and more scenarios appearing on screen and more and more problems for you to have to deal with and before long you find yourself clicking frantically as you try and order the various vehicles to go where you wish. Overall, it is a fantastic early access game that appears to be very much true to the name, with some features

still missing; such as multiple voice actors but the core game is still there in its entirety.

Of course, every game has its faults and this one is no saint. Most of the menus are confusing and as mentioned earlier I did struggle a fair bit with the inventory management, how much money I had to spend on new units and so forth. My other issue was with the fact that there were no notifications, as far as I could see, when the various teams finished their assignments! I had no idea which crews were free and which ones weren't! Sometimes I would accidentally pull a police car away from an in progress assignment!

Truth be told there isn't much to talk about with this game in its current state other than the mentioned above, the tutorial is effective but simplistic at best and the loadout of the UI and display is very user friendly, it's not hard to see where your bases are and with the maps it's not hard for you to manage your crews.

Devs, if you are reading this, please make all notifications more obvious and help the user understand how to use the shop more effectively!

For simulation and management lovers, this is the game for you! ■



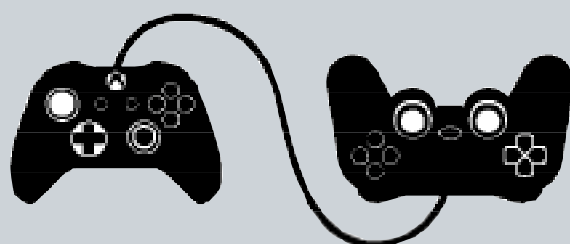


**Publisher:** Bethesda Softworks

**Developer:** Arkane Studios

**Genre:** Stealth

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

November 11th (Worldwide)

*By Calum Parry*



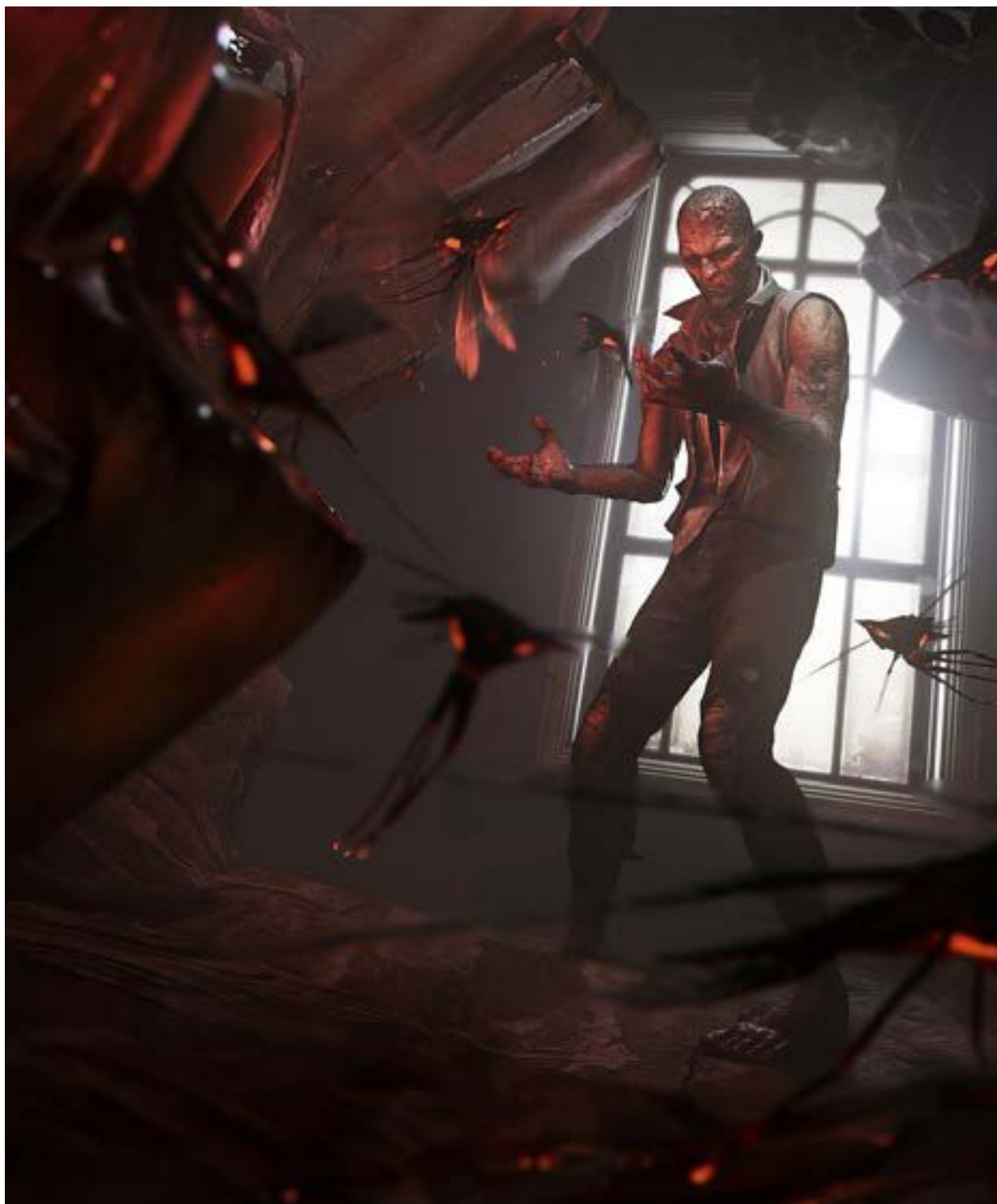
**B**ack in 2012, Arkane Studios brought us Dishonored, a brilliantly well crafted stealth/action title in a surreal plagued world with an engaging story, a unique watercolor art style and

excellent combat. It was well received and even made it to many players game of the year lists. It was begging to have a sequel and now after four years we're getting one this year.

During gamescom 2016, me and other fellow journalists were welcomed to Bethesda to see a new gameplay presentation of the anticipated sequel.







Dishonored 2 takes place fifteen years after Dishonored. A lot has changed, the rat plague is over and we are introduced to a new playable character, but for fans of the first will know exactly who it is. It is none other than Emily Kaldwin all grown-up and out on her own mission of vengeance and along with a set of her own unique but familiar abilities.

We were shown two parts of the presentation. The first half follows her as she infiltrates a heavily guarded mansion, while the second follow Emily as she visits the Witches of Brigmore where things go awry. Just like Dishonored before, players tailor their own experience, and there is a number of ways to carry out your mission. Stealth, all out chaos or a combination of the two, both presentations showcased

this in each scenario, and what we saw was only just one way of proceeding.

As Emily infiltrated the combat plays similarly to before. You still have your trusted blade, pistol, and ever useful crossbow, but from the gameplay shown it's the refinements made to the combat that stand out. Not only that but with the new abilities introduced gameplay it feels more fresh, instead of just reusing the exact same formula as before. This is also reflected in visuals as well. As opposed to the Unreal Engine used before, Dishonored 2 uses Arkane's own engine which is based off id Tech 5. This clearly worked in their favor as the visual fidelity is amped, with improved lighting, shadows, animations and more all while retaining the visual style of the original. It's further enhanced, especially inside the mansion as we were shown cascading stairways and revolving platforms and rooms.

Far Reach, is Emily's version of Blink. A shadowy claw reaches out to grapple upon objects for traversal, but unlike Blink it doesn't teleport. Others showcased were: an ability







to inflict killing move upon multiple marked targets and ability to become a shadowy creature and stealthily move without being seen, this was similar to Corvo's possession ability, except now a lethal strike can be made while using this ability. While weapons may be the same, although more could be revealed upon release, the abilities Emily has at hand are more unique, but are still familiar to that player's will easily grasp and use to their advantage. And just like before these abilities can be upgraded to further enhance the experience.

As Emily traversed through the halls of the mansion she encounters a new enemy. Built out of clockwork machinery, it

wields blades and even after decapitated it still attacks with aggression. After they're dispatched and with her target in sight we're shown two possible outcomes, the assassination or non-lethal method, the later shown was like seeing the target get a taste of their own medicine as he's strapped to one of his own contraptions and put through torture. It certainly felt like this added more depth to moral choices within and I'm sure there will be more impactful consequences as the story progresses, but we'll have to wait and see.

The later half of the presentation where Emily takes on the Witches of Brigmore was more of a showcase of

action. Stealth and chaos, Emily fights her way through before succumbing to ravenous attacks of the witches. It signified that certain actions, such as rushing in and striking may not be the best method to hunting your target, but it is certainly one way of doing it and with that, it was the end of the presentation.

Dishonored 2 is shaping up nicely and it will certainly be a welcomed return. It keeps the beloved formula and further enhances it with new abilities. As a fan of the original, the November 11th release date can't come soon enough. I avidly look forward to returning to the universe and test my skills of assassination. ■





# Reviews

## Stardew Valley

### Stardew Valley Review

**Publisher:** Chucklefish

**Developer:** ConcernedApe

**Genre:** RPG

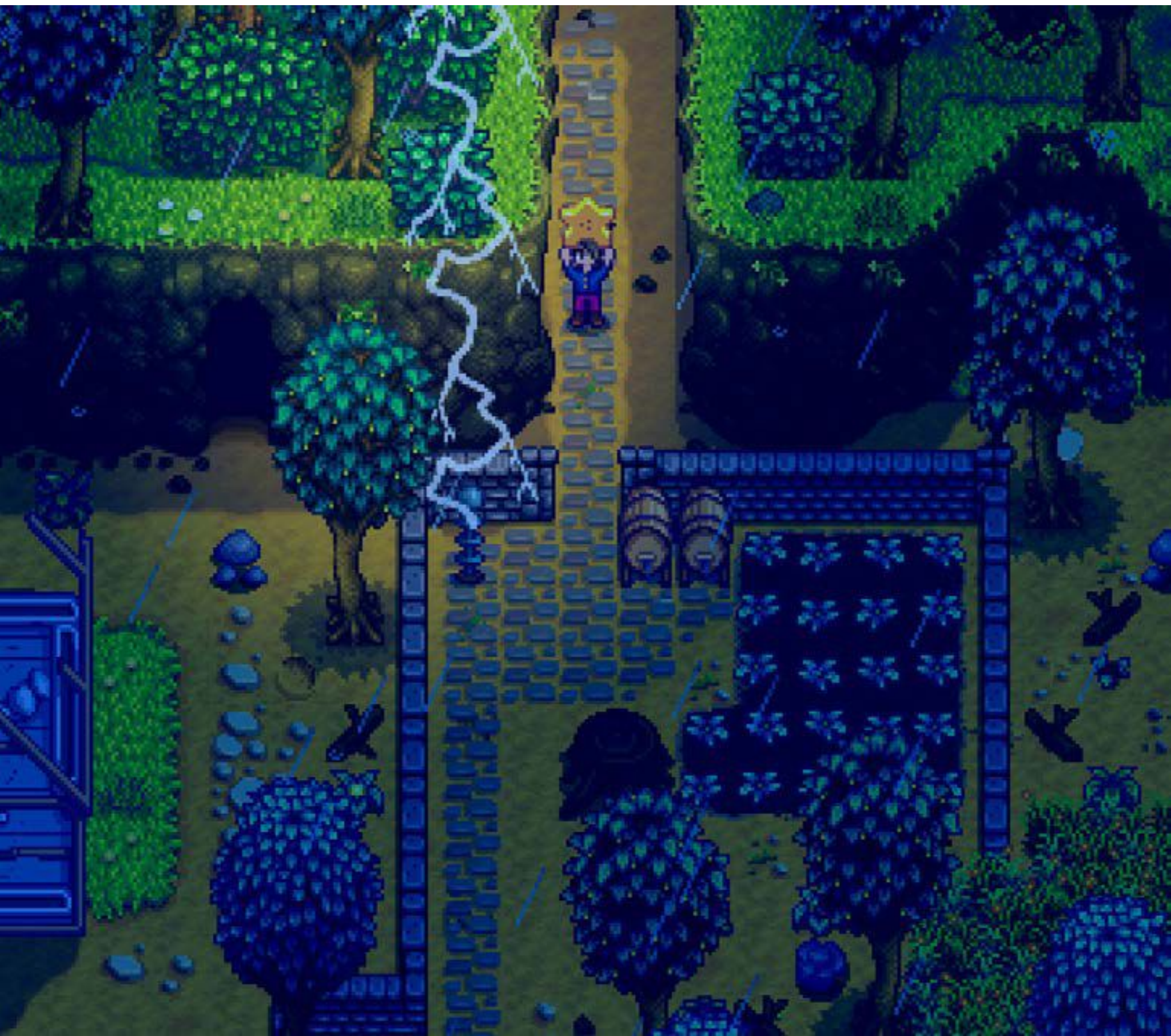
**Platform:** PC



Release Dates

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Nerd House*





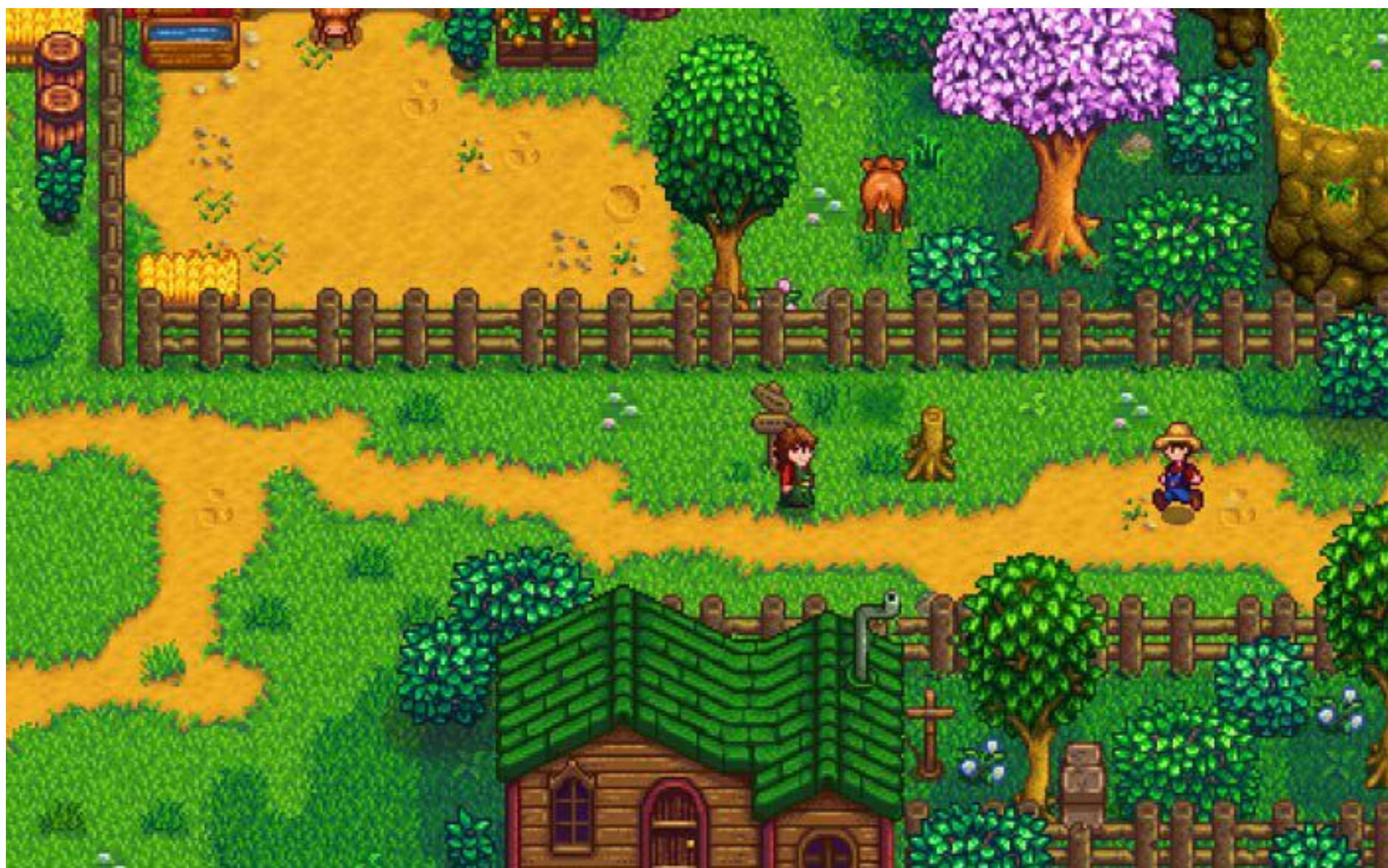
Over the years we've seen our fair share of casual/farming titles. There are a couple of series that really symbolize the genre: Harvest Moon and the lesser known but still great Rune Factory. They're simple enough: buy crops, tend your farm, sell crops, manage farm animals, and with Rune Factory add fighting monsters, managing equipment, and crafting. Stardew Valley takes a lot of inspiration from the aforementioned games, combining a lot of the mechanics from them into one amazing game. Some mechanics are even inspired

from Animal Crossing! Let's take a closer look at these features and mechanics, shall we?

Right off the bat, you may feel overwhelmed at the sheer amount of things available to do in Stardew Valley. Nearly everything is available at the very beginning of the game. You'll start off with your farm and land, and are pretty much left to tend it or do whatever you want. You can start planting crops, chopping down trees for wood, clearing stone, or even go across town to the mine and start searching for ores and minerals. After a little

while you'll be able to build a barn and even a chicken coop and start tending animals. You even get a dog or a cat, depending on which you choose during character creation.

One of the biggest things about Stardew Valley is getting to know the other people who live in town. Remember the feature I mentioned inspired by Animal Crossing? This is it! Each towns person has their own likes and dislikes, certain types of gifts they like receiving, and each day they have their own schedule that they go about doing. When you get to





# Reviews

## Stardew Valley

know someone enough, and give them enough gifts, you can marry them (gender does not matter!) and even have children.

At some point, you have the choice to back an intrusive/destructive corporation (not recommended) or help restore the town community center.

In the community center, a group of spirits will task you with collecting bundles of items for them. In return, they will unlock a different feature

around town that will help you in various ways, such as the rail system for fast travel. There are so many more things to do, it would literally take me an hour or so to detail them all out. I've pointed out the more important ones though, and these should keep you busy for awhile!

This game just OOOZES charm. The graphics are amazing for this type of game. Sprites look great, the animations are great, and you can easily tell what

everything is. It's sometimes hard to believe one guy made the entirety of this game all by himself. He did a fantastic job, especially on the endearing art style. As a casual game, it has some amazing relaxing music. Every area has it's own theme too, and sometimes it's different depending on the time of day. It makes the game more interesting and a perfect choice to play to unwind after a hard day at work or school. I experienced no major





# Reviews

## Stardew Valley



issues (or even minor issues) while playing Stardew Valley. 30+ FPS at all times (30 is my minimum), no lag or stuttering, no obscene loading times, and the controls are very easy. Just point and click along with WASD to move. You CAN play with a controller, but it feels a lot different and a little clunky to do so. Mouse/keyboard method is recommended.

My only gripe, although minor, is that you can only save the game when you sleep in your

bed at night. Again, this is minor, and not really a big deal, but nowadays most gamers expect the freedom of saving anywhere. You've just got to try this game. You will easily lose dozens, if not hundreds of hours simply managing your farm, earning money, and

getting to know the townsfolk. Not to mention designing your farmland, placing buildings, tending animals, and crafting. This game will find you saying "just more more day" at least a dozen times before you finally close the game. ■



**Stardew Valley**

**9/10**



### Headlander Review

**Publisher:** Adult Swim Games

**Developer:** Double Fine Productions

**Genre:** Action

**Platform:** PC, PS4



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Thomas Hughes*



**H**eadlander is the new title from famed developers Double Fine, a studio that has previously brought us Broken Age, Psychonauts and the recent remaster of Grim Fandango. Headlander is an attempt to bring metroidvania

style shooters back to the forefront, using 1970's inspired sci-fi as a backdrop.

The gameplay revolves around the use of a detachable head that you, the player, controls. The head in question is the last

human alive in the universe, given the fact that the rest of humanity decided to upload its conscious to the cloud, as far as societal satire goes, this is pretty on the nose. Once all of the humans uploaded their consciousness a naughty A.I







enslaved them all, and there you have it, a good guy, a bad guy and a story to tie it all together.

Straight from the off, the game is unashamedly comedic, telling players they can perform dances based on whatever body the human head is currently occupying. This mixed in with movie references and witty dialogue, makes for a refreshingly funny, comedic experience. This is why it's no surprise that Adult Swim decided to publish the title; it fits in with their library of sarcastic millennial targeted comedy perfectly.

Gameplay comprises of a 2D map in which your characters must solve puzzles whilst also fending off the enemy

forces looking to repel you from travelling deeper into the city. In true metroidvania style, there are loads of hidden passages filled with power ups, unfortunately the map marks every single one of them down for you, so there's no real feeling of discovery. It's a shame as the hidden secrets throughout the entries in the Metroid series are both a challenge and a delight to hunt out. Headlander cheapens this sense of discovery, which is a real shame.

Combat is fun and responsive: most shots you fire often reflect off walls and ceilings, meaning you can be a little more intelligent about aiming your bullets. There are a few different enemy types, all of which you can jack by removing their head

and stealing the body. There a real satisfaction to flying over to an enemy and just ripping their head from their shoulders: it often serves as an excellent way of neutralizing a room full of enemies shooting your way.

One thing that I feel lets the game down is the lack of character in the main characters, there's the obvious reasoning that the lack of lungs basically makes it impossible to talk, but it feels like they've missed out. The character is basically demoted to making facial expressions, while every other character around him does all the talking. Given the game's comedic aspect, there could have been some really great dialogue.











It's also worth noting that one of the biggest issues with Metroidvania title is also present in Headlander: Backtracking. The game expects you to do it quite a lot, which is always going to be a big issue in a 2D game. The right way to progress can often be unclear leading to frustration. I spent a good few hours stuck in one area because I hadn't levelled up the right thing, even though the game gave me no form of indication that I needed to. It's these kinds of minor issues that limit the game's full potential.

The game's aesthetic is probably its strongest feature, the 1970s sci-fi theme really helps game stand out visually. Everything has a cartoon-like element to it, feeling something akin to a Saturday morning cartoon. This mixed with various movie

and pop culture references lead to a world that has been developed with both passion and care. Using various inspirations from the past whilst still managing to create something that looks, sounds and feels incredibly fresh.

I feel the game would have really benefited from a 2 player mode, giving players the chance to explore the world together. I find splitscreen coop always fits 2D Metroidvania type games exceptionally well and often makes the combat more enjoyable.

Headlander has a lot going for it, the comedy writing is excellent along with an incredibly well designed and thought out aesthetic. Gameplay is also incredibly solid, with quick and responsive gunplay. The biggest let down is how confusing progression can be thanks to a lot of backtracking. Pinpointed secrets on the map also spoil what could have been a great feature. Headlander is definitely worth a try if you fancy something a little bit different in the guise of the established metroidvania genre. ■



**Headlander**  
**7.5/10**



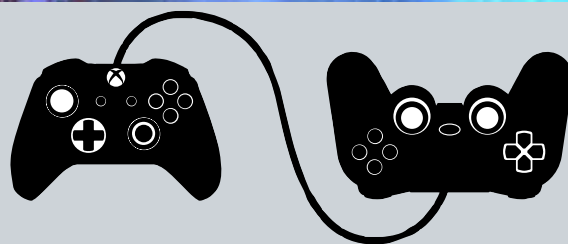
### Slain: Back from Hell Review

**Publisher:** Digerati Distribution

**Developer:** Andrew Gilmour

**Genre:** Action

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Nerd House*



**W**hen Slain! first released it had a rocky launch: lots of bugs, way too difficult, and just the usual launch issues. Since then though, things have been fixed, re balanced, and just overhauled to the max. Now it's officially relaunched as Slain:

Back From Hell, and it's simply glorious! An arcade action game with emphasis on combat and puzzles, Slain: Back From Hell is what happens when Castlevania and Dark Souls had a baby, and then that baby learned how to play some serious metal.

At first I had some issues with this game. It's been awhile since I've played a game like this, or anything resembling Dark Souls-like difficulty, so I had to go through an adjustment period where I was literally bashing my head into my desk. "You have been SLAIN!" graced







my screen far too many times. After this adjustment period I got into the swing of things and made great progress, only dying when I made a stupid mistake.

Slain: Back From Hell is a side-scrolling, platforming hack and slash. You progress through each stage in a very Castlevania-like fashion. Hitting switches, killing monsters, and avoiding traps. You control Bathoryn, a dark hero who is awakened to save the 6 realms from impending doom. His weapon of choice: a giant claymore. Using this claymore, Bathoryn

cleaves all enemies in his path, and then later using elemental energies to charge his sword and exploit enemy weaknesses. He also has access to magic, which he can use to fire a projectile (which will match the element he is currently using) and to perform a massive magical screen-clearing explosion when in a pinch.

The biggest thing to pay attention to while playing is the environment. In many stages, there are traps cleverly hidden on the floor in your forward path. Once you have

discovered these traps, you can avoid them easily. Other obstacles are not so clever, such as the horde of skeletons and witches blocking the path. One tactic you can use to stay alive against the hordes is parrying. If you block at just the right moment, you can parry the attack and perform a powerful riposte. When done properly, you can recharge a portion of your mana so you can perform more magic attacks. When you finally master the timing required for a parry/riposte, the game becomes MUCH easier to handle. Another thing to



## Slain: Back from Hell

keep in mind is that projectiles can be reflected by hitting them, providing you a way to defend yourself from them.

Slain: Back From Hell operates on a checkpoint system. As you progress through each stage you will come to pillars that light up once you touch or pass them. When you are slain, you will be returned to the last pillar checkpoint that you touched. While this is a very handy feature to have in a game like this, sometimes when you are dealing with a particularly difficult section you will be

redoing the section many, many times until you finally reach the next checkpoint. This can be quite frustrating at times, and if this happens it is recommended to take a short break.

At the end (and often throughout) each stage, you will be facing bosses, mini-bosses, or a battle gauntlet. Waves of enemies will spawn one after another, and it'll be your goal to simply survive. The bosses are often pretty large, and follow a script/pattern, and are usually easily dealt with once you figure out those movements

and attack patterns. If you are used to playing something like Mega Man, you'll have no issues with the bosses.

The Steam store page describes the game as having a gruesome pixel art style, and this is very true. Slain looks like it might have felt right at home on the SNES. For a pixel style, everything is really detailed and animated very well. You'll see a great example of this animation after each boss fight when Bathoryn gives thanks to the Great Horned Metal God. Oh, and blood/









gore is everywhere. Generous amounts of blood and gore are all over Slain: Back From Hell.

A nice touch added to the options menu is the ability to have scan lines overlaid on the screen, giving a really retro or arcade feel. There are two different kinds available, as well as the option of no scan lines at all. "The most metal soundtrack you've ever heard." This statement, found on the Steam store page, is extremely accurate. The soundtrack is quite amazing, and works very well for the game. The game isn't being played correctly if

you have the sound or music turned off, as it's very much a part of the game's feel and ambience. It took a few minutes to get a controller configured to play the game comfortably, as the default controls were a bit odd. You can play with the keyboard, but a controller is highly recommended. No lag or FPS drops/issues were noticed at any point during gameplay.

After a bumpy start, I started to have a lot of fun with Slain. Once you get into a groove, it's hard for anything to stop you. Generous amounts of metal, blood, and headbanging give this game a unique feel, one that is hard to give up. Slain: Back From Hell is well worth a try. ■





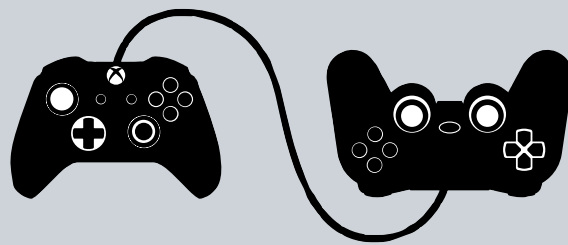
### Slain: Back from Hell

# 8/10



### Bird of Light Review

**Publisher:** Black Shell Media  
**Developer:** Roach Interactive  
**Genre:** Action  
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Nerd House*

**A**t first I didn't think Bird of Light wouldn't really amount to anything. To be honest I was a bit reluctant to give it a chance. But I sucked it up, sat down, and played it for awhile. It's deceptively difficult if you treat it as a speedrun challenge. And there are quite a few speedrun challenges built

into the game. It has a very light-hearted look and feel, but don't let that fool you! There is some fun and a lot of obstacles to overcome should you aim to top the leaderboards.

Bird of Light is an endless-runner styled game with light puzzle, platformer, and

speedrun elements. There is a story, but it's pretty lackluster and frankly, uninteresting. But for those who still want to know, it's about a young girl named Tara who moved from the city to a farm. She befriends the animals there and lives happily, until one day the animals start disappearing. It's up to Tara,







along with her new friend, the Bird of Light, to track down her friends and rescue them.

At first glance, the game seems a bit short...only sporting 21 levels. As you get further along however, the difficulty ramps up considerably. You also have to collect a certain number of coins every few levels before the next batch of levels is accessible. Each level sports a few eggs, coins, and a key. The coins are used to reveal the locations of the eggs and the key before each level, so you can plan a route through the level. The key is to open

the door to exit each level. The eggs are collectibles to grab as you run through each level.

Each level has a few badges to earn, often for collecting all the eggs or simply reaching the door at the end of the level before a certain time. This is where the speedrun aspects mentioned earlier come into play. The speedrun badges are easily where you'll sink the most time into the game. You'll have to very carefully plan your route through each level and not make any mistakes to achieve the time you need to earn the badge. To assist in

this, the game allows you to pause the game to view a map of the level you are currently on. When you unpause, the game gives you three seconds to get ready to roll out again. I found that this was a very helpful and considerate feature to have, and I'm sure speedrunners will appreciate it.

Honestly this game isn't much to look at, but it looks just fine for what it is. Everything is very colorful and bright, adding to the game's overall tone. Some of the animals look like they've seen better days though. The environments look a little









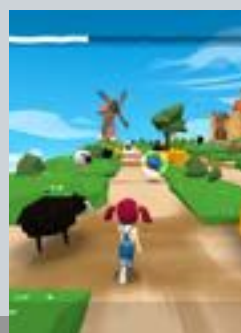
repetitive at times, but most runner games suffer from this. The interface is very simple, but that's a good thing in this case. Too much clutter or too many distractions would only cause your time to suffer.

Bird of Light is very, well....light in the sound department. The soundtrack is very carefree and relaxing, while the sound effects are very quick and cutesy. Plain and basic, really. And that's perfectly fine for this game. You won't be focused on the music or the sound very much, due to the time constraints of the speedrun challenges!

Seeing as Bird of Light is rather easy in the graphics department, it shouldn't have

any issues running on most systems. It ran at a constant 60FPS, with no drops or lag. Getting a controller to work is a different story. It seems to be one of those games that locks down to whatever control method it senses first. Meaning, if it detects a mouse click, it prioritizes mouse and keyboard controls. Not that the controls are hard to pick up and play, it's just a minor annoyance that most people might have to deal with for a few minutes before they can actually play.

For what it is, Bird of Light is an enjoyable adventure into a colorful, bright world with many challenges to be completed. Despite it's extremely light tone, it's quite difficult if you are keen to collect all the available badges. Be prepared to sit down and really think about every move you make in each level! Speedrun enthusiasts will have a great time with Bird of Light, while other casual players will still find some enjoyment despite the challenge. ■



**Bird of Light**

**8/10**



### Alone With You Review

**Publisher:** Benjamin Rivers

**Developer:** Benjamin Rivers

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PS4, PS Vita



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Ben Robson*



**A**lone with You brings up some particularly fascinating questions about planetary colonisation and the nature of the human condition, and it really pushed me to the limits of what I was willing to endure in order to find my answers. The game

sees the unnamed protagonist travel throughout ruined installations in order to find materials that can be used to repair their escape pod before their otherwise empty colony succumbs to the elements. Everyone else is dead, and the narrative has that same cynical

bleakness that permeates any other disaster story.

The most notable thing about this title at a first glance is the artwork – everything is shown through this lens of astounding pixel art, and levels will often play with perspectives in a way



Body of Hana Pang





that I personally had never seen before. Each action, be it climbing through a maintenance hatch or getting into the spacecraft, is accompanied by a few frames of animation that truly give the sense of interaction as opposed to simply moving from one cell to another. Each area has its own unique visual style, so the player is never quite sure what it is they are in for as they travel to their next mission.

Each level consists of a series of rooms, many of which will be initially inaccessible, and a variety of items to scan and interact with. The objective

will usually be to scan a given number of components that can be used to aid in your escape from the ruined colony, though the vast majority of interactable objects will contain story hints and snippets, allowing for the grim history of each area to be slowly revealed. After each mission, the player will be taken to a holographic simulation in order to converse with a relevant member of staff.

Alone with You has opened up some degree of internal debate for me in the context of artificial intelligence and projections. If a person is constructed from snippets of their personality,

can they be considered as part of the whole? As the game progressed, I found myself becoming increasingly cold towards these characters, certainly in no small part due to the other question this game brought up – if there is never a fail state, what's the point in playing? The title's most glaring issue is that it is, to be frank, boring, and that's a real shame considering how much I was enjoying both the art style and the story.

Perhaps there's some underlying commentary on the monotony of modern life that I'm simply not intuitive





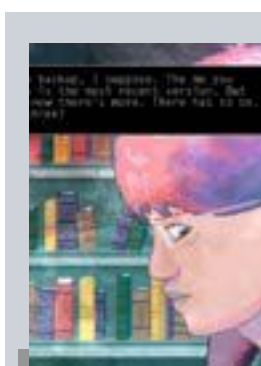
enough to grasp, but making each day play out in exactly the same way is not the way to captivate your audience. At one point, my AI companion turned around and said “come meet me in the core again, as always”, and I felt that even they were tired of the whole scenario. In the end, I managed to force my way through ten days, but with no end in sight as of yet, I’m throwing in the towel.

Alone with You has so much potential with its impressive visual design and writing; unfortunately, the lack of any real challenge or adversity of any kind makes slogging through sprawling mazes of

rubble and corpses seem more pointless than having romantic intentions for a computer. Oh yes, the game is a “sci-fi romance adventure”, and although I’d like to find out what all that’s about, I’ve been playing for several hours now and I’ve found nothing.

Despite my best efforts I cannot for the life of me enjoy this game, but the only real reason for that is because it

fails to offer any meaningful gameplay. Dare I say it, Alone with You could have done with implementing the odd out-of-context puzzle in the same way that N.E.R.O. did because, as it stands, the game is just a rather tedious visual novel. What I find most ridiculous is just how compelling I found the narrative to be, and it’s times like these that I wish I had a greater attention span (or tolerance for pain). ■



# Alone With You

# 5/10







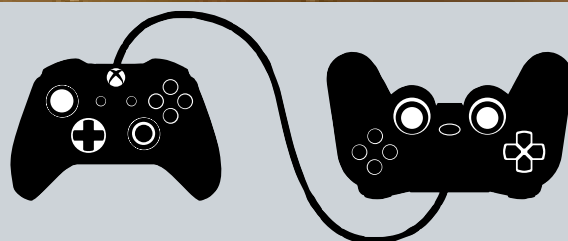
### Solar Shifter EX Review

**Publisher:** Headup Games

**Developer:** Elder Games

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PC, Xbox One



Release Dates

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Simon Brown*



I'm a big fan of old-school shoot 'em ups (or SHMUPs as friends call them), for some reason especially vertical ones. Arcade CAVE shooters like the DonPachi and Mushime-Sama titles and classic 80s era fare like Tiger Heli are pure joy to me so I was looking

forward to reviewing Solar Shifter EX. So how does it fare?

As a budget indie title you have to make some concessions for production values but the game doesn't give a great first impression, the menus and initial screens are

clunky and feel unfinished. Once into the game however, things do improve somewhat, at least visually.

The game's scenery, especially the planet surfaces, look really good and the look of the game is nice if a little generic. The







game doesn't perform that well however, things judder and jostle about onscreen as the framerate fluctuates which is a bit off-putting and actually leads into the controls.

Solar Shifter EX controls quite badly, a SHMUP lives and dies based on its controls and Solar Shifter EX just feels wrong.

Your ship doesn't have very fine movement, the lightest of inputs make it jump too far which in a game about avoiding enemy barrages isn't ideal. Combined with the fluctuating framerate it leads to a muddy feeling response which just makes positioning yourself really frustrating really quickly.

What about the game itself? Every SHMUP has a gimmick, the black and white bullet and shield mechanic from Ikaruga, the unique weapon system of Radiant Silvergun, even just quirky scoring systems. Solar Shifter EX's twist is that you can 'shift' around the screen to dodge enemy fire, this consists of holding X and



pressing a direction causing you to warp to that area of the screen. (You can also tap the right-stick to accomplish this)

This shifting comes into play mostly on bosses, they tend to fire beam lasers that pan around the screen forcing you to shift over them to avoid death. It also is useful for positioning in general and for getting out of the way of the

mostly undodgeable bullet barrages that come your way.

In most SHMUPs, especially those of the Bullet Hell (or danmaku) variety, you get a ramp up in difficulty to ease you into them (unless you are a sadist and move straight to 'I want to see a screen full of bullets' difficulty). Enemy firing patterns teach you how to move and how to react by

being fair and following rules you can learn, usually firing AT you or leading you in some way, so when you DO see a screen full of bullets you are ready and don't just die in a glorious fireball (eventually).

Not so with Solar Shifter EX, the waves of enemies don't fire AT you, they just follow a routine, firing in a specific way. How is this different to other games?







Well they ramp up the difficulty by making them fire so fast that you are unlikely to dodge them. It's done this way to encourage use of the shift mechanic but it feels unfair and poorly designed and the game's controls are so bad you inevitably just die.

The quirky camera angle doesn't help with this either as you aren't quite sure where you are lined up, it's not a traditional straight down view, it's slightly angled (similar to Taito's Ray Storm), this is made even

worse when the game pulls the camera down almost behind your ship and you are expected to now know where to position yourself whilst the game shows off pretty cityscapes.

The game also has atrocious load times, which you endure

every time you die. These add up and combine with the poor controls to create a very frustrating experience. Unfortunately there isn't much choice when it comes to SHMUPs on Xbox One but you'd be better off putting the money towards Raiden V. ■



### Solar Shifter EX

# 4/10



### BOID Review

**Publisher:** tinyBuild

**Developer:** Mokus

**Genre:** Strategy

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Alex Hamilton*



It's not very often that real-time strategy gets a revamp in indie form, and it's even rarer when the finished product turns out to be competent and well thought out. With that pessimism-charged opening sentence I'd like to introduce BOID (Bio Organic Infestation Drone), from developers Mokus. The game centres around a peaceful humanity sending immense ships filled with drones out into the stars to terraform planets for habitation,

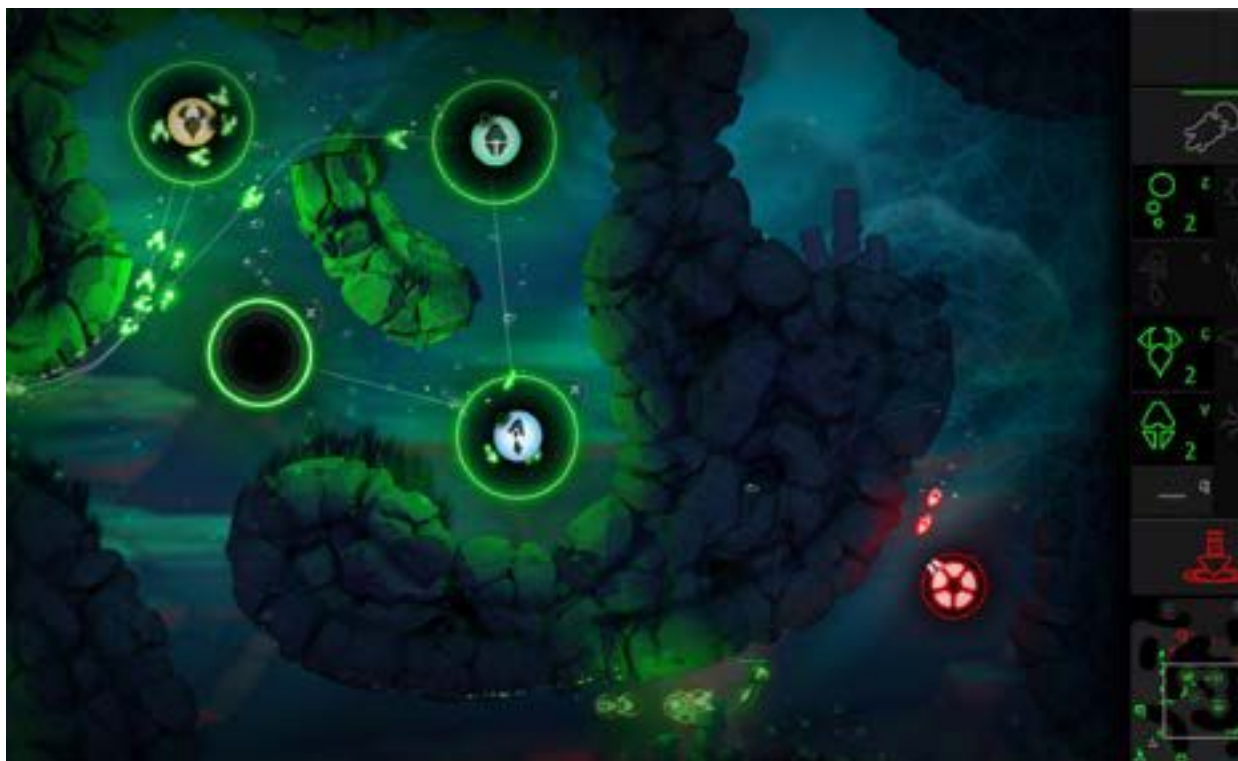
only something has gone wrong with the distant earth-like Kepler 42-C, where your character, a lonely worker of an orbital space station, has to control primitive genetic life forms to take control of an immense underwater landscape.

Interestingly, you'll only learn more about the game if you purchase its single-player DLC campaign, which even then is simply maps from the multiplayer wrapped around

a story. BOID arrives as a multiplayer game at heart, and challenges players to take over their opponents spawning zone. It's this free-to-play side of the game that makes it stand out as a unique RTS game in its own right. Instead of being able to build bases, construct pylons or recruit troops, you are provided with spawners that generate drones. These little sparkly beings of primordial life can be sent to capture other spawners around the







map, including ones that with transform them into a different class adapted to specific tasks like ranged combat or defence.

The goal is simply to destroy the enemy completely or control all of the points on the map, though the two objectives are rarely mutually exclusive. Each player can control up to eight varieties of drone-troop, adding a layer of tactical choice to any battle. With all things considered, BOID is essentially a MOBA-lite kind of game - managing your troop output as well as their direction of travel and spawning locations is key to victory. When some maps include as many as ten spawners for you to control a fair amount of micromanagement comes into it, and the task is much

easier said than done. Mokus has also introduced some intriguing and thoughtful level design into the mix, too, offering competing layers cul-de-sacs, dead-ends and bottlenecks with which to trap, outwit and defeat their opponents.

Graphically, BOID won't blow any minds, yet there is something of an ambience to the watery effects and the way that your troops glow with a warm neon light. This also works wonders in helping the player pick out what's going on when two gangs of

drones collide in battle. Each class has a quite distinctive silhouette, making it relatively easy to pick out what class is going where and what your opponent is deploying.

boid3Musically the game never really expands from a low-key, ambient background score that serves to underpin your strategic movements. Though there could perhaps be a lot more tension added to it, the music at least is never outright distracting or overwhelming, leaving the player to concentrate of the most important parts of the game.

BOID is a strategy game that is bare-bones in terms of content, but what it has is exceptionally well-polished. From the mechanics to the level design to the meta strategy involved, this title is one that multiplayer strategy fans should put a few hours into, even if only because it's free-to-play. ■



**BOID**  
**7/10**



# Reviews

## Clock Simulator

### Clock Simulator Review

**Publisher:** Kool2Play  
**Developer:** Kool2Play  
**Genre:** Strategy  
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Ben Robson*



Click once a second, every second, sixty times a minute, and if you're anything like me, you'll never reach an hour anyway. Clock Simulator is one of those bizarre time-sink games that you can lose entire minutes of your life to if you aren't careful, yet the euphoric sense of calm that washes over you after a quick session makes it all worth your time.

The game is actually a lot more interesting than the name might suggest; the player begins having access to a tutorial level and the first stage, neither being particularly easy if you've only just started. My first suggestion for succeeding at this game is to sit on the title screen, close your eyes and be the clock, because seconds never seem to

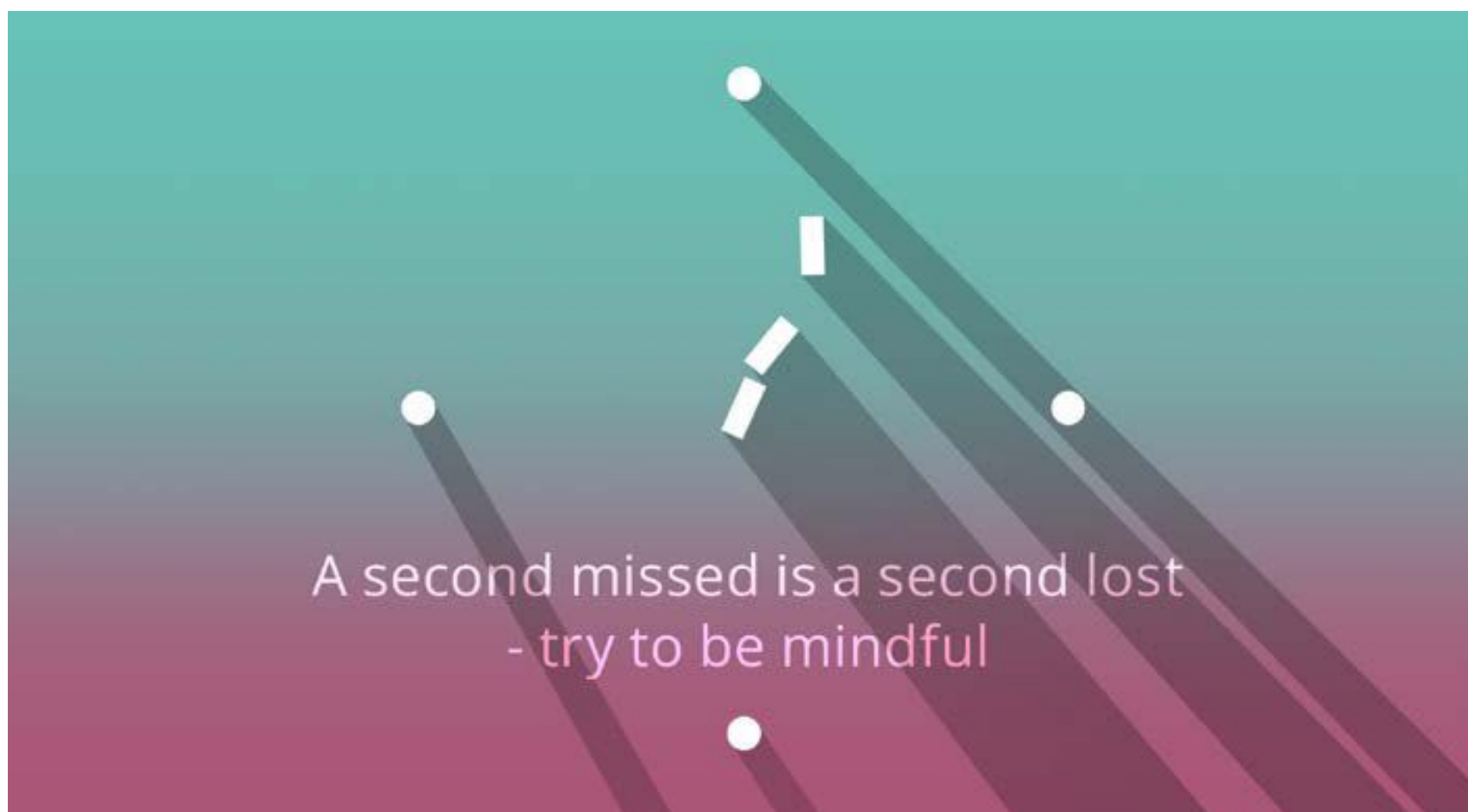
be the same length as I remember. Once you've spent some time on those stages, you will progressively earn more, all having their own unique gameplay mechanics and design. One level has you clicking once a second every second, yet another level has you clicking once a second every second to stop the screen from getting darker. A couple of

stages even feature what looks to me like a Minecraft pig, just to shake things up, swapping out the glorious sound of tick-tocking for oinking. It's this kind of diversity that will really keep you coming back for more.

As I mentioned, the game is really hard, possibly because I have no sense of rhythm. As you make mistakes, the game







will indicate to you how much longer you'll be playing for, often by using the hand of the clock as a life bar. There is nothing quite as heart breaking as trying your best to get back in tempo, only to see that hand shrinking away into nothingness regardless. Try as hard as you like, time waits for no man, and when you start making those first few mistakes, it's fairly certain that your run won't last you much longer.

and nothing is going to hurt you if you don't succeed; most certainly, the game is not simply an exercise in player hypnosis that will have you bend the knee to our Cthulhuian Overlords. As you slip into the harmonious sounds that this game puts out, it becomes easier and easier to forget where you are, what you should be doing or even who you are. Become the clock, and all of your problems will disappear.

Clock Simulator may not be particularly fun, but that doesn't mean that it isn't enjoyable. When you get in the right mood, the game can be really peaceful and it desperately urges you to succeed; I can only imagine the benefits that playing will have on a person, but the increased calm and borderline meditative sense of mindfulness that the game is able to put over you feel pretty damn good. ■

In spite of the games small price tag, I can see Clock Simulator being very beneficial to those people who can make the time for it. There are no eldritch horrors that need combatting,





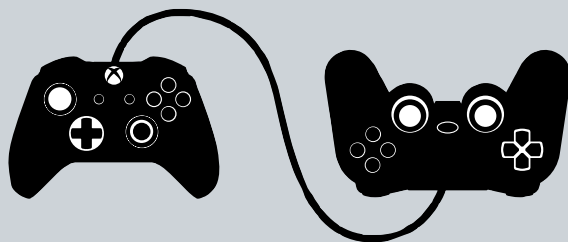
### Sherlock Holmes: The Devil's Daughter Review

**Publisher:** Bigben Interactive

**Developer:** Frogwares

**Genre:** Puzzle

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By VodKaVK*



There's a certain defying element in the title of the latest adventure of the pipe-smoking, eccentric and shrewd sociopathic consulting detective. The Devil's Daughter, who is touted so ominously, is no other than Sherlock's adoptive daughter. The epithet, however, refers to her biological father Moriarty, the lifelong and now deceased arch villain

of Sherlock. In this position, Sherlock is presented as some sort evil step-mother, more concerned about the mirror's judgement about who's the fairest in London, than about his own child. Particularly for being responsible of her father's death, Sherlock is symbolised as somewhat evil. The juxtaposition between the symbolism inherent in

his position and the trope of us being always the good guy leaves Sherlock with the challenge of pushing through and making a firm appearance as a father.

With this interesting premise, the game decides to spend most of the time ignoring it. In The Devil's Daughter – the game – you will play as Sherlock







resolving four different and unrelated cases. More than showing his relationship with his daughter or Moriarty's legacy, the cases display a shady and fickle side of London, where unskilled locals drudge away in mines, factories and refineries, and the uppermost classes capitalise on their ignorance with sadistic, albeit grand, motives. The semi-open world slightly nudges the player towards exploration, making them believe that there is much to the world than there actually is. There is an alluring aura to the industrial capital of The Empire, which

is recreated in detail and showing the polarising day-to-day of the gentry and the underclass, and of the worldly capital and local gossip.

The stories enacted through the smaller characters, sadly, do not cohere with the overarching story. Take Kate, Sherlock's annoying daughter; she makes a series of sporadic appearances in between investigations, only to disguise her irrelevance in the story to the player. It is easy to read between the lines – she clumsily becomes the centre of the final bit of the story. Here's where the game confirms that

suspicion that you had in the back of your head all the way throughout: this game lacks any coherent direction. The 'moral choices' that you encounter in each case – because gamers love them, don't they? – are brought up in the final episode in a culmination that makes a cumbersome attempt to thread all plots together. It fails disastrously, to say the least, breaking the illusion and artificially contriving the ending – plus, the sometimes uncanny animations don't help much.

Overall, this is not the only aspect where The Devil's



## Sherlock Holmes: The Devil's Daughter

Daughter feels like it loses its course. The individual cases that make up the whole game, while being able to stand on their own, play out in a series of mini-games, most of which are skippable and have little to no relevance to the plot. Many

of these puzzles are too hard to read, or too finicky to build a whole game based on them. Some others do not challenge your intellect, but your skills with a controller. However, whereas each individual puzzle is an unpolished mess,

their brevity makes them bearable. What's more, the continuous change of pace and mechanics always keeps you on the edge of your seat, wondering what will come next.

These short challenges are often repeated throughout the game, so they never feel like an afterthought, and the variety of the type of puzzles makes it overall fairly entertaining. Before you get bored, you're already onto the next puzzle. It is a pity that they're not connected with the story that much. What is linked to the story is the deduction process; an element already present in the previous title where you thread the different elements and create your own version of what transpired in the case you're investigating. The truth is never revealed, though. This is something we've often seen in many games, like *LA Noire*, where *The Devil's Daughter* gets a lot of inspiration from.

This is an interesting way of creating some moral conundrums for the player, albeit a bit artificial. There is a modest feeling of accomplishment once you've matched the dots and come







up with a subjectively coherent story, but if you're in the dark about how to proceed, you can always try linking events until you hit the nail. And often it is necessary, as the wording of some events or clues is not precise or conclusive enough, and do not narrow themselves down to just one logical conclusion. You may even find new logical conclusions if you match events willy-nilly.

All in all, *Sherlock Holmes: The Devil's Daughter* does

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not live up to the refined and tasteful expectations of the astute detective, but it sets an addictive pace that can keep you entertained for quite a while. In a way, the bastardising of the elegance and canniness characteristic of Sherlock Holmes makes the

player feel more like Watson – always trying to catch up with the detective, and given a challenge toned down for his own minor intellect. It's like an upbeat adaptation for children of something complicated and multi-faceted, and full of mini-games. ■



**SH: The Devil's Daughter**



**6.5/10**



### Zenith Review

**Publisher:** Badland  
**Developer:** Infinigon  
**Genre:** RPG  
**Platform:** PC, PS4



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Ethan Butterfield*



Well, I'll be honest, I didn't know what to expect when I started up Zenith. The concept seemed pretty basic, an RPG structured world with upgradeable equipment and spells, an interesting and dynamic cast of characters such as mages, elves and emperors, and a story woven straight out of medieval fantasy

adventure. However, Zenith is much more than just your run of the mill fantasy adventure.

Developed by Infinigon Games, Zenith is a humorous, charming ARPG that hits all the right notes and then some. Putting on a more comedic tone than other games in this genre, as well as being quite the refreshing departure from the J.R.R

Tolkien-esque dark storytelling that we've all come to know. Storytelling that can be found in games such as Dragon Age, Hunted: The Demon's Forge and The Elder Scrolls series.

Comparing Zenith in terms of story isn't exactly fair when it comes to those bigger budget titles, though. No, Zenith is more closely linked to InXile







Entertainment's notable success *The Bard's Tale* in that regard.

With the meta humour, the mocking of cliches and the main character's total departure from the rest of the cast, it really feels like *Infinigon* was paying homage in a way, or at the very least, giving a wink and a nudge.

When discussing the actual plot, it's fairly interesting. You, the player, take control of a mage named Argus and begin a journey that takes you from 'good for nothing' to 'legend of the land'. To be fair, you kinda start off as an already well-known figure, but one thing leads to another and things happen. I'll say this much with respect of actual plot details, Zenith has probably

what is one of my favourite introductions to a game ever. To sum up and without wishing to spoil, at the start of the game you mock Disney's *Frozen*, piss off an elf captain and avoid singing spiders all in the first five minutes. It was pure gold and had me anticipating what was to come.

Plot is a fickle thing however, and needs a well structured world and characters to carry it through. I mentioned earlier that the world was "RPG structured" and that definitely rings true. The set up is your average RPG affair. You have your classic 'red potions heal, blue potions restore magic' deal and the enemies are the same variation of soldiers, spiders and

giant rats (except the rats talk and the spiders sing). Where this formula gets changed up is in that ever-present quirkiness that really brings the game into its own, taking an overall dreary setting and turning it into a delightfully colourful and light-hearted experience. Quirkiness that led such things as orc mafias, spaceships and elephant cannons to crop up.

As I've probably mentioned numerous times now, humour is the crutch that holds this game above others. The comedic timing is absolutely brilliant and all the characters had a distinct personality that prevented them from getting lost in the mix of an RPG. Speaking of characters,









the developers must've had it out for Final Fantasy as there is a peculiar bunch of "emo" adventurers in-game going by names like Claude and Titus. All jokes aside though, I enjoyed all the characters that you interact with throughout the game's entirety.

Enough with story and characters, how does the game play? On the PS4, it runs quite smoothly and didn't really present a lot of issues worth bringing up. The only thing I can think of is that Zenith can't handle multiple enemies on screen very well, there's a bit of screen tearing that occurs but again, nothing that's a deal

breaker. When describing the gameplay itself, it's entertaining and oddly addicting for how simple it is. You have a projectile, a melee and an area of effect attack that are all varying degrees of useful. What makes the gameplay a bit bland is that enemies aren't very difficult, so instead of going up against quality bosses and minions, you'll be fending off the numbers game. This is a bit of a let down considering

the amount of detail put into the other areas of this game.

All in all, Zenith is a comedic gem with addictive gameplay and an emphasis on storytelling only being hindered by its samey setting and somewhat samey gameplay style. I would definitely recommend picking this title to anyone if you they have the time and cash. ■



Zenith

7/10



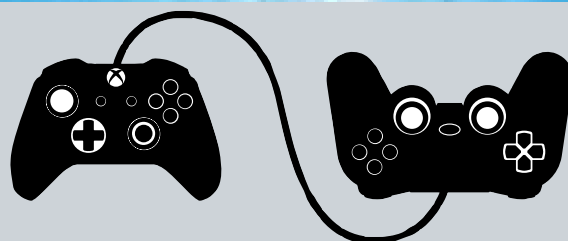
### ABZU Review

**Publisher:** 505 Games

**Developer:** Giant Squid

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PC, PS4



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By VodKaVK*



If you happen to have an entirely rational fear of the sea, ABZU will manage to provide the other-worldly diving experience turned up to eleven from the comfort of your room. In the safer environment that is your house, facing an alien creature wading in your direction doesn't have the same spine-chilling effect, no matter how harmless it may be. This is ABZU's ultimate goal – transport you to formidably

strange and ethereal sea worlds, and suspend your worries overloading the screen with entrancing colour palettes, swaying movements and nigh-magical creatures, as you become an impressionable maritime tourist.

To a certain extent, ABZU feels like a musical with you as the protagonist, where you're led by the hand around a world of wonders. Your character, a

diver shrouded in mystery, will have to find their way through coral reefs, deep-sea trenches and impeccably symmetrical ruins, following the trail left by a great white shark and a cryptic civilisation of powerful and magical artefacts. These objects – scouting robots that tail you wherever you go – are necessary to solve the vaguely defined puzzles that, more than actual challenges, feel like an excuse to keep the







player investigating each area, instead of brushing off more recondite areas with more extraordinary creatures. The mix between sight-seeing in search of fish and completing the tasks required comes around naturally, nudging the player to find new forms of life. As they dive towards the winches holding down the chain that opens the large underwater gate, the player will get side-tracked by a bright orange spiky angler making its way to some even brighter coral. A grouper will then cross your path and by holding down a button, the

diver will be clutching onto its top fin, and letting themselves be carried among the purple and pink seaweed. These jolly distractions are the core essence of this game – the urge for discovery of new species and the distinct kinaesthetic feeling of riding on the backs of each orca or shark.

What this game lacks in any narrative aspect is made up in the display of colours, shapes and movement that sustains the whole game, and how the player's agency allows them to navigate the bottom of the

ocean or among the crevices on the rock walls. What follows the sparking curiosity leading players to new places also ensures that they continuously get astounded at every corner. It's the dream of riding on wild dolphins' backs while leaping out of the sea that every kid has, hitting you unexpectedly, and with much more chromatic variation than you ever expected in the environment.

Swimming from one end of the reef to another, or through caves filled with crabs and lobsters, is intuitive and organic,

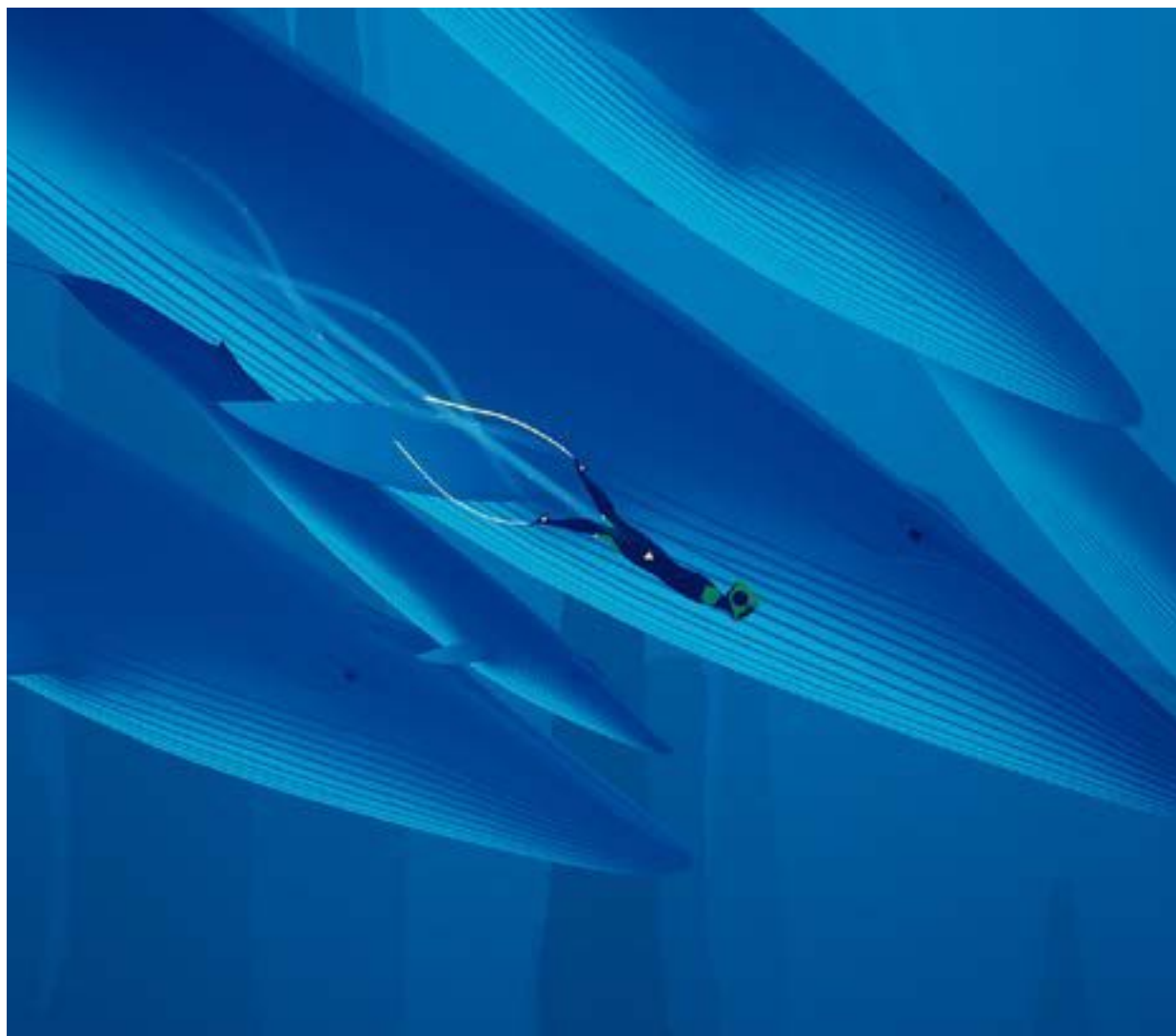






whether you're hitching a ride on a dolphin or paddling your own flippers. ABZU streamlines its control scheme in order to provide a flowing and mesmerising sensation of movement, making you feel comfortable in the ocean, as if your body was designed to move through the medium. This is important because whereas in ABZU you are a tourist, you also blend with schools of fish as though you were one of them. ABZU familiarises the player with the sea in an ode to the enigmatic potpourri of colourful, dangerous and diverse forms of life that inhabits it. In order to do so, first it helps the player shake off the fear and welcomes them with easy and maneuverable controls.

When I first got my hands onto this game, I could not help to be suspicious about the display of colour and its ever-so-enticing theme. However, ABZU uses the sea and its enthralling palettes for higher motives than just as a gimmick. If art aspires to stir the emotions of its audience, ABZU achieves it brilliantly, and perhaps the way it blends the visual shock with the underwater motion just creates the perfect mix to give you



goose bumps. Putting the cherry on top, a soundtrack balances the highs and lows, with modest parts with a single violin and extravagant ones, where a whole orchestra plays at unison. ABZU's shaky and obscure story lazily attempts to give you something to tie in the different sections of the game, but even though it may not be perfect, it's clear that ABZU's priorities are not concerned with its

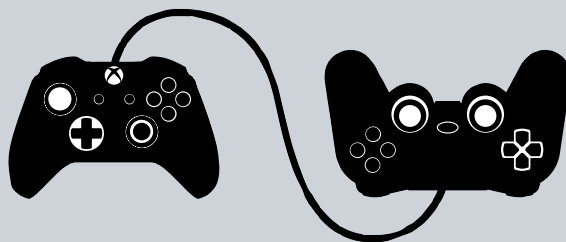
narrative. At some points, ABZU overcrowds the player with species, shoals and colour, not being able to find the joy in the little things. But due to a good pace that never bores the player and an experience that'll surely make you gasp, ABZU rises above these little issues as a colourful and memorable gem of a game, bound to provide with a delightful experience. ■





### Dragon Quest Heroes Review

**Publisher:** Square Enix  
**Developer:** KOEI TECMO  
**Genre:** Action  
**Platform:** PC, PS4



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Nerd House*



Finally, we get a Dragon Quest title on Steam! I got the PS4 version when they put it up for pre-order, and have since sunk dozens of hours into it. Even if it's very similar to Dynasty Warriors or Hyrule Warriors, it's still a great game all on its own and just oozes the usual Dragon Quest charm. If you were on the fence about purchasing the game because it was coming from Koei Tecmo, fear not! They

surprisingly did a fantastic job with their port of this title, and YES, they ported the PS4 version and not the Japan-only PS3 version. The game has a lot to offer, and is a lot of fun to play!

The Steam version includes all of the special Slime Weapons from the various special editions released for consoles. You have to reach a certain point early on in the game to access them though.

Monsters and humans have lived alongside each other in perfect harmony for as long as anyone can remember. But one day, every monster in the world (save for one) suddenly turn on their human friends and begin attacking towns and cities around the world. Luceus and Aurora, captains of the Arba Royal Guard, serve as your playable "main" characters. Together with Healix, Luceus' slimy companion is







the one monster who remains unchanged, and King Doric, (King of Arba), Luceus and Aurora set off on a quest to discover the secret behind the monsters turning, and put a stop to it. The game plays like your typical Dynasty Warriors title. That is to say, you control a character and hack/slash/jump your way through literally hordes of enemies, which are all iconic monsters from the beloved Dragon Quest series. Skeletons, Slimes, Drackies, etc are all here and look amazing.

Early on, the player gets access to an invention called the Stonecloud, which is essentially a giant flying fortress or airship. The Stonecloud will serve as

the player's base of operations in their campaign to combat whatever fate has befallen Arba. Housing all the amenities the player will ever need, the Stonecloud is an indispensable tool in your quest. Shops, a Chapel (where you can save the game), and other locations are found on the Stonecloud, and is where your characters will return after each successful battle to recuperate and prepare for the next skirmish.

Along the way, you will encounter and recruit many heroes from past Dragon Quest titles. Players will recognize many faces, such as Terry, Yangus, Alena, and Isla. All of them are controllable on the

battlefield, as your party consist of four characters which can freely be swapped between. Each one has a certain play style and unique abilities that can be used to clear waves after wave of monsters in each area. Dragon Quest Heroes also features the Tension system that originated from Dragon Quest VIII. As you take and deal damage, a meter fills up. Once full, you can enter a state of High Tension, which boosts your speed and attack power, and grants access to devastating Coup de Grace attacks!

In addition to all of the playable characters, Dragon Quest Heroes introduces the Monster Medals mechanic. As



you defeat monsters they each have a small chance to drop a medal which bears their image. When picked up, these allow the player to summon these monsters to the field to aid them in battle. Monster Medals come in two varieties: Sentry and Saviour. Sentry monsters stay in the general area they are deployed in and defend the area from all attacks. Saviour monsters are one time use monsters that provide HP or SP recovery, or other beneficial effects. Using these Monster Medals can often prove to be quite a boon in many different combat scenarios, which can range from defeating all monsters or defending a certain

point or character on the field. Each Monster Medal takes up one, two, or even three of the six available medal slots you have, with more powerful monsters taking up the most slots. Picking up medals for monsters you already have summoned will heal them. Monsters are best used to hold strategic points on the battlefield while the player takes care of others, or providing buffs to your party that they otherwise do not have access to.

A lot of other features are present in Dragon Quest Heroes. The Alchemy Pot from Dragon Quest VIII makes a return, utilizing the materials

you find during battle to create accessories. You can use the gold you earn each stage to buy weapons, shield, accessories, and orbs. Orbs act as your armor, bestowing upon your characters the benefits of the armors they represent. Mini Medals are earned by completing quests, found on the battlefield, or earned from defeating large numbers of specific enemies; These are then used to buy materials, Alchemy Pot recipes, and special weapons. Accolades act as achievement markers, rewarding you with Mini Medals as you complete certain milestones.

Being a port of the PS4 version, the Steam version looks amazing. The AA is a little rough around the edges, but there are workarounds for that for the time being. The game capitalizes on the unique art style that Dragon Quest has had throughout the years, and Akira Toriyama's artwork is front and center throughout the game. There's enough eye candy here to satisfy any newcomer to the series.

Remember all the classic Dragon Quest sounds, songs,







and jingles from yesteryear? Heroes has it all! It's such a nice touch to hearken back to the good old days with the music and sound effects. Many of them you'll recognize from Dragon Quest VIII, honestly. Picking up items, sword slashes, etc. All sound amazing and just instill a great sense of nostalgia. The soundtrack fits the game near perfectly, even if it is a bit light-hearted. Fans will recognize a lot of the tunes present, and even come to love some new ones.

A thing that a lot of people might like to see is the option to have Japanese voice overs. Those are available here! I have no issues with the English voice overs, but some people do so it's nice to have

the option to toggle between them for those players.

60 FPS? Check! Multiple graphics options, including resolution? Check! Controller support? Check! In-game button prompts that match your controller? Check! Multiple control schemes? Check! No issues here! The game runs very smoothly on my rig and I have yet to experience any problems with framerate, stuttering, lag, or anything of that nature. I don't expect to either!

This is an amazing Dragon Quest title, even if it doesn't follow the usual Dragon Quest formula. If you ever want more Dragon Quest titles to come to Steam, buying this game is the best way to vote for more. A solid experience, Dragon Quest Heroes definitely deserves a spot in your Steam Library. Fans of the series will certainly find a lot to offer them, with tons of content and replayability. Nostalgia abounds, and the game is just a complete and utter joy to pick up and play. ■



**Dragon Quest Heroes**

**9/10**



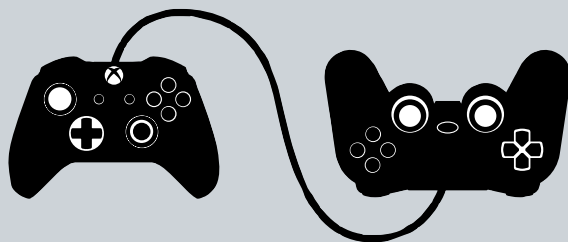
### Fallout 4 - Nuka-World Review

**Publisher:** Bethesda Softworks

**Developer:** Bethesda Softworks

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Andrew Duncan*



The final chapter of the Fallout 4 Season Pass has finally been released, and it takes place in the happiest place in the Commonwealth -- the theme park Nuka-World! No more dark fog of Far Harbor, and long gone are the masses of radscorpions inside the Vault-Tec Workshop. Instead, you're on your way to the one shining beacon of joy in an

irradiated world -- just hop on the monorail to the far, far west of Boston, and get ready for fun!

Yeah, it was never going to be that, was it...? Instead, not everything is as it seems, as you approach Nuka-World aboard the monorail. The amusement park is still a place of mirth, but unfortunately everyone is laughing at you,

not with you. Straight off of the train you're forced to run a gauntlet of traps, creatures and ghouls, each more fiendish than the last. Also those stupid monkeys with the cymbals...

However, should you survive the gauntlet (bring stimpacks) right to the end, you're rewarded with the run of the park. The entire complex may







be inhabited by raiders, but that doesn't mean you have to follow their lead and be evil. Except yeah, you totally do. If you want to do any quests in the entire of the park, you've got to grab your hooded cloak, go to the Dark Side and do quests for the three raider factions: Disciples, Operators, Pack.

It's super limiting from an RPG perspective -- if you've been playing as a paragon of virtue who only kills when necessary, you're going to have a very short questline... There

are a few things to do, such as collecting Park medallions or finding all of the hidden Cappy pictures, which unlock some unique loot, but Nuka-World is no place for heroes.

It's run very similarly to the Far Harbor DLC -- you leave the Commonwealth to go to a far off place, and find three factions. But whereas Far Harbor allowed you to play it several ways, there's not really a lot to do in Nuka-World if you're unwilling to work with psychopaths.

All three factions have been stuck together in one section -- Nuka-Town U.S.A. -- for the past year, and they are eager to conquer the rest of the park. It's up to you to decide which faction goes where -- will you stick the animalistic Pack in The Galactic Zone? Are the blood-thirsty Disciples best suited for Kiddie Kingdom? Perhaps the caps-obsessed Disciples are deserving of Safari Adventure?

Of course, you may be wondering why these areas haven't already been taken





over -- why remain in Nuka-Town? Obviously because the other areas are full of maniacs, monsters, ghouls and freaking robots! Despite my thought that this was going to be a different flavour to the tough enemies of previous DLC, instead I only found tons more new types of them... Most aren't radically different in looks from the enemies of the Commonwealth, and that's to be expected since they're in such close proximity. If this was an 8-bit game I'd have to say that they are recolours -- however, since

it isn't, I can honestly say: if Nuka Cola Quantum does that to a Mirelurk, what's it doing to my Sole Survivor?!

Speaking of flavours, we find out that there are far more than the three Nuka Cola varieties that we're used to; Cherry, Quantum and regular. There's also Wild, Grape, Orange, and Dark - the 35% alcohol soft drink for adults! The DLC also reintroduces Victory and Quartz, from Fallout New Vegas. There are also several flavours to be found, which you can mix

yourself in one of the mixing units around the park. These have a variety of effects, but also require different amounts of the normal Nuka Cola types.

Working for the gangs of raiders, you'll be forgiven for thinking it won't affect your alliances back in the Boston area. You'd be wrong. One of the story missions involves you heading back to the Commonwealth -- and many of the side missions require this as well -- to take over a settlement. You can talk the settlers off of



## Fallout 4 - Nuka-World

it, or you can take the violent approach and descend upon them like the wrath of God to scour them from the land!

I've never made it a secret that my Fallout characters are a little on the evil side... I tried to make my Sole Survivor a bit of chaotic neutral, but was happy that I had an excuse to finally threaten everyone to get my own way. Unfortunately it's not enough. There are far too many fetch quests, unheard of amounts of backtracking and although it has some nice areas, Nuka-World is far too small.

It is roughly the same size as Far Harbor, if you include the indoor areas and the fact that

you're constantly back and forth to the Commonwealth, but doesn't manage to be interesting enough. The gang motives are: kill for pleasure, kill for profit and kill to show power. At least in Far Harbor the different factions had some nuance, they were much better written. There is a new companion in Nuka-World, which is a good thing -- because most of the others don't like you being evil. Being a dick, sure, but slaughtering a

settlement is heavily frowned upon by the majority of them.

The very interesting design and lore entries don't save the game from being very middling. I'm glad I got the season pass before its £15 price increase in March. That's more the focus of an article than a review, but the season pass as a whole hasn't been amazing, and Nuka-World just plops an irradiated cherry on a disappointing sundae. ■



Fallout 4 - Nuka-World

6/10





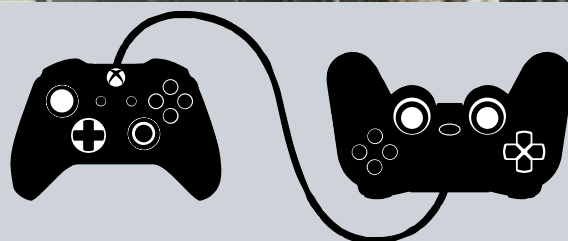
### Shattered Skies Review

**Publisher:** Free Reign Entertainment

**Developer:** Free Reign Entertainment

**Genre:** Action

**Platform:** PCPC



Release Dates

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By James Boote*



**A**re you tired of zombies? Well have we got a game for you! Shattered Skies is a game by Free Reign Entertainment who have taken the gaming conventions and totally turned them on their head by making an open world MMO PVP survival game, but

with aliens! Shattered Skies has all the features you know and are bored of with various other zombie survival games but just added aliens. So exciting!

Shattered Skies has you play in a post apocalyptic world where the moon has been destroyed

by a comet which has crashed to Earth, and have for some reason turned into crystals and now aliens are attacking. For some reason. Yeah, the game doesn't concern itself with scientifically accurate or compelling storytelling, beyond giving a half assed reason as to





# Reviews

## Shattered Skies



why aliens are attacking you. No, Shattered Skies all about the gameplay of surviving.

The game boasts a “massive persistent open world”, what this means is a decent sized map with towns, outposts and trees in it. While the map is a good size it is populated by very little. The world has one environment: trees and the cities have a limited number of building types, all in similar states of disrepair and varies different type of cars littering the place. Graphically it looks good enough, but isn't visually interesting, it does its job well enough without doing anything spectacular or interesting.

Your job as the player is to search the map looking for things to protect yourself from the aliens and the other players, choosing from a variety of pistols, shotguns and machine guns that you can assign as your primary or secondary weapon slots. All very standard for the genre, along with everyone's favourite survival game mechanic; food and water meters, yay! Yes, as well as surviving your fellow players and annoyance of aliens you also have to battle your hunger and thirst because everyone enjoys that and while this was a feature added to make surviving a zombie apocalypse that little bit more tense in Shattered Skies it feels

like they just added it because that's what was expected of them because it is not a tense game, it is much more of a shooty bang bang game.

The reason why Shattered Skies is much more gun focused than other survival games is because of the aliens you have to fight. For some reason the aliens have two health bars you have to shoot down as well as being able to shoot orbs at you from their ... something. The game doesn't make it clear where the orbs come from, I assume the same place the aliens come from, which is out of nowhere! One way zombie survival games have tension is through having to sneak around, trying to keep



out of sight of the zombies to be able to get the rations you need to survive, in Shattered Skies sneaking is pointless because at any moment the aliens will just teleport a few metres from you and attack. No warning, just boom, alien and you either have to waste your ammo on killing it or running away. There's no tension, just running around shooting.

Where Shattered Skies gets good is the PVP element. Sneaking round area, hunting down your prey actually gets tense and fun, however Shattered Skies has a few barriers to this being what you'll spend your time doing. Firstly while I have been playing the servers have been very sparsely populated, to the point that people will put on chat where they are in order

for the few people playing the game while be able to find them and actually participate in a fun activity. Secondly while you are trying to find enough ammo to fight in PVP you will continuously have aliens spawning in your face leaving you to either waste your ammo or leave empty handed. Yes, the aliens, the main point of the game, becomes nothing more than a pointless hindrance. They destroy any form of tension and stop you from playing the actually enjoyable part of the game. Well done Free Reign Entertainment.

Combat itself isn't anything spectacular. Usual first/third person shooter affaire; Move with wsda, look around with mouse, aim with right click, shoot with left. Nothing new but works well enough. It also has obstacles you can place around you to damage and mildly hinder the enemies, as well as an obligatory crafting system to build more traps, the higher level you are the more you can craft. All standard, nothing new but it works well. When you die you get respawned with only the basic starter kit, all the things you've scavenged lost. While you could find it





# Reviews

## Shattered Skies



again, chances are anything decent will have been looted.

Shattered Skies is a pretty standard, mediocre, middle of the road survival game with aliens. A game that I could recommend you pick up as long as you have some friends to jump on with you, waste an hour or two hunting each other down then forget about until you need to delete some stuff to make room for more porn or new games. Unfortunately what stops me from being able to make this recommendation is the price. At the moment

of writing it is £21.99 for the base, no thrills game. This is way too much for a game so basic, lacking in any form of thrill or longevity. If it were no more than £5 I'd be able to recommend it, but not at over £20! There is nothing here that justifies this price, let alone the Ultimate Edition which is £72.99! All you you get in the special

editions is some skins and start off at a higher level, a level that just lets you use certain guns and craft certain things. Things that you will lose in death. As such I can only recommend this game to someone who enjoyed Day-Z but wished it had aliens. Do not waste your money, if you want a shooter to play with friends wait for Battlefield 1! ■



### Shattered Skies

# 4/10



### Grow Up Review

**Publisher:** Ubisoft  
**Developer:** Ubisoft  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Platform:** PC, PS4



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By TheSphericalCat*



When Grow Home released last year, it quickly became one of my favourite games: it was simple but refined and knew exactly what it wanted to be. When the sequel - Grow Up - was announced, I was equal parts excited and sceptical: The original was very close to a perfect game in my eyes and I didn't want a quick cash-grab marring its name.

Luckily, Ubisoft Reflections have delivered a spectacular sequel.

Grow Up is everything a sequel should be: it takes what made the original great, refines it slightly and then builds on it. The climbing is deeply intuitive and feels exactly the same as I remember it being. Gone are the limited leafy glider or petal air brake, replaced with a permanent upgrade unlocked

as you progress through the game. Instead of one Star Plant - a giant space beanstalk - there are four, and it's accompanied by 24 floraforms which are there to help you reach new heights and distances. They're very important too, since Grow Up takes place on an entire planet and its moon.

The game begins with a catastrophe: MOM - your







spaceship - crashes into an asteroid field, scattering parts of her around the planet. Protagonist drunk robot BUD is joined by POD, a slightly homesick satellite which you can see through the eyes of to set waypoints and get the lay of the land. POD also tells you about future upgrades and the vague locations of the parts of MOM, though these suggestions appear throughout the game, even after you've gotten the part or upgrades.

POD will also set you 40 challenges, which consist of passing through a series of

checkpoints in a time limit. Some of these are easy, some of them are frustrating, and some of them really require the later upgrades. Completing these will unlock new suits for BUD, which give him additional abilities such as jumping higher or gliding faster. As with the first game, upgrades are gained through collecting glowing crystals scattered around the planet; some of these are very well hidden but you fortunately have a radar to help you locate them.

The planet is much larger than the original game's setting, but it never feels too

big: Having 100% completed it, finding all the collectibles and running all the challenges is a task, but nowhere near impossible. It helps that Grow Up is a nice place to be, with colourful and interesting landscapes that make you want to explore everything, scrounging every nook-and-cranny for their secrets.

As previously mentioned, to help you explore everything Grow Up has to show you are floraforms: these alien plants resemble those you'd find on Earth, except they are much larger and have some



unusual properties. Of the 24, my personal favourites are the gong-shaped one which will hit you for miles, the mushroom that has the bounce of a trampoline and the family of plants that were effectively floral cannons.

Once you begin to reach certain heights, climbing having long become second nature, *Grow Up* starts encouraging you to fly. With the jetpack eventually getting strong enough to allow you to actually fly and a permanent glider being accessible, I found myself

spending a long time in the air admiring the contour of the planet. The flying is a little awkward at times: You don't ever stop being a physics-based animated robot so you can be at the mercy of gravity at times, though after a couple hours of practice it too became second nature.

The Star Plants remain mostly the same, colossal flora which absorb energy from flying rocks to grow into space. This time out, controlling the shoots which connect to those rocks felt much easier, with the vines

less inclined to branch off in the other direction. They also reach further if you're close to a power source, I believe: In the original, it wasn't uncommon to have a branch fall inches short of their target, but I didn't have this happen at all in *Grow Up*.

The only thing I have to say against *Grow Up* is it is very reliant on the player having played *Grow Home*. It doesn't teach you the climbing mechanics, it doesn't tell you what to do to make the teleporters work, and it doesn't really tell you what to do with







Star Plants. Having played Grow Home, I didn't notice this until a friend played Grow Up without playing the original and was confused by the game's' core mechanics. This isn't a big complaint against Grow Up because they did work out everything pretty quickly and Grow Home is an excellent game that you should definitely still play if you haven't.

So, despite it's poor tutorial for players new to the series, Grow

Up has made me very happy. I have greatly enjoyed the 12 hours I spent completing it, and couldn't recommend it enough. With its timeless graphical style, excellent score backed up by great mechanics, this is a must-have for anyone who

enjoyed the Grow Home. If you never played the original, I'd recommend picking up Grow Home first: it's a much shorter - and cheaper - game and if you enjoy it, then pick this up. ■





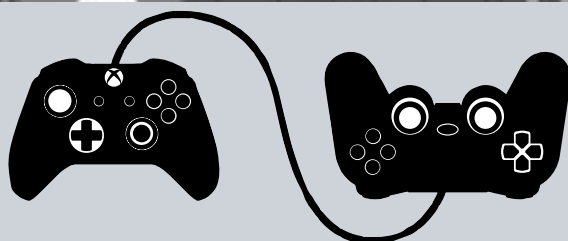
### Asteroids Minesweeper Review

**Publisher:** Black Shell Media

**Developer:** Francois Braud

**Genre:** Puzzle

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By TheSphericalCat*



There's nothing quite as satisfying as clearing a Minesweeper mine field: after minutes of concentration and careful consideration the relief of making it through is almost indescribable. The random placement of bombs means that no two games are the same, and you could play Minesweeper ad

infinitum. However, if you're looking for something a little more challenging, look no further than Asteroids Minesweeper, a 3D variety from developer Francois Braud.

The premise is exactly as you'd expect: scattered throughout a field of cubes are some mines, and empty cubes display

how many mines are in it's surrounding cubes. There are 26 cubes now however, instead of the 2D variety's eight, which is a significant ramp up in difficulty. To help, the cubes are now colour-coded depending on how many mines are nearby, and instead of flagging mines you can now disarm them. This causes the empty cubes







that you have uncovered to dynamically change allowing you to single out those cubes that contain mines.

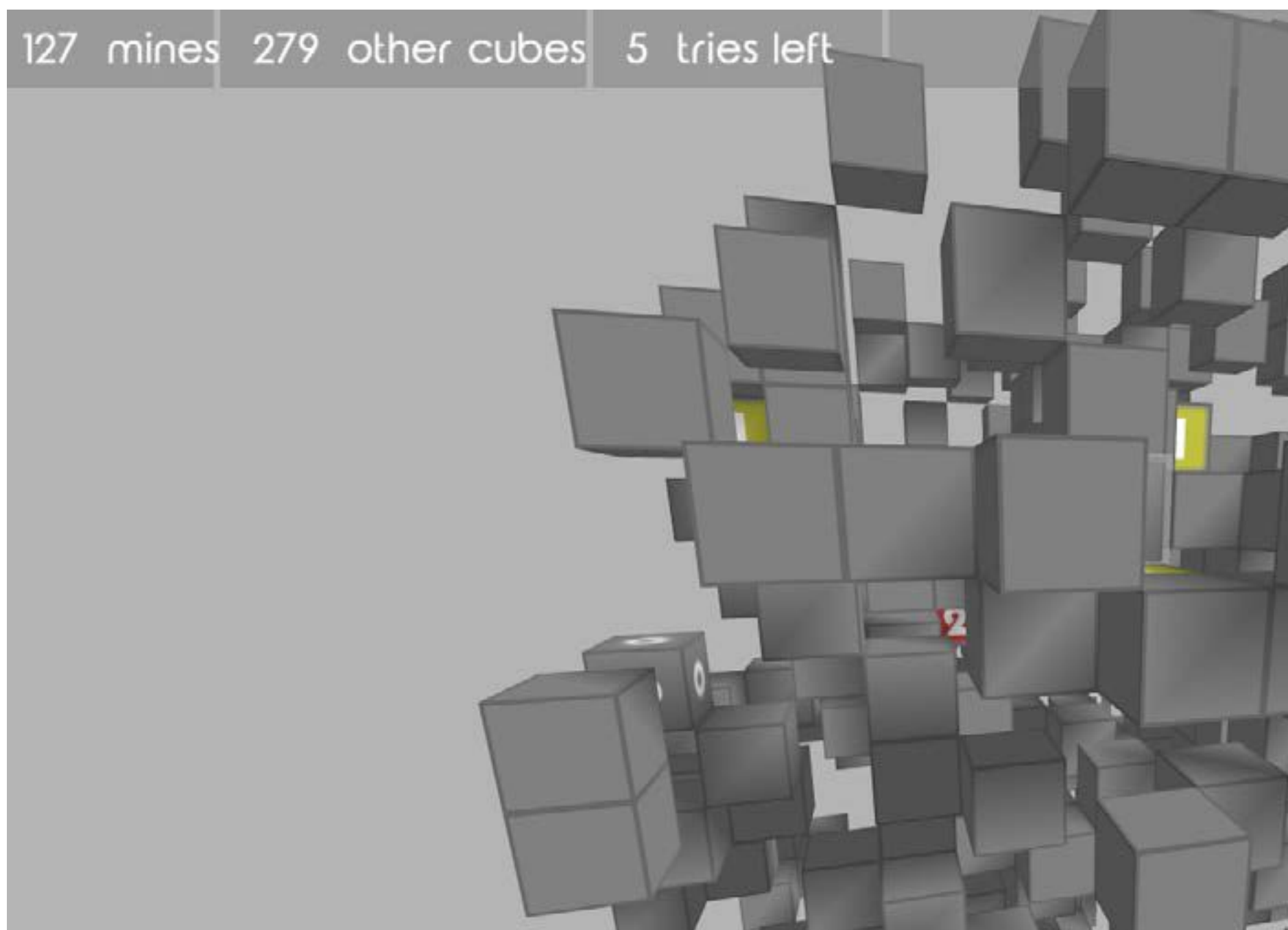
Another distinction from Minesweeper is the attempts system: you have some leeway in trying to diffuse the asteroids similarly to a lives system. You lose an attempt if you click a bomb or incorrectly identify an empty cube as one that has a bomb, and you have seven of them to start with. This allows me to say with some certainty that the explosion effect is quite loud!

There are several pre built levels in the game, and some modifiers to change up the tried-and-tested gameplay. Some levels have bombs that, after five moves, will change places to any unrevealed cubes. These levels sound difficult, but they really presented no additional difficulty because I found that I could clear through the majority of the level and confine the mines to a safe, predictable group of cubes. Other levels had indicators of how many mines were in each column, which was helpful for the hollow cube and sphere levels. The final modifier

spawns differently coloured outlines around random cubes, with the same colour outlines indicating that those cubes contain the same thing - either nothing or a mine!

When first started up, Asteroids Minesweeper didn't really look much like an asteroid but rather a series of clean, white boxes. A quick jump into the options menu allowed me to enable the space graphics however, and finally I was breaking down asteroids. The options menu past that very much disappointed me: there is no options to change resolution,





full screen and no sound sliders make this a very lackluster PC port of what seems to be a mobile-optimised title.

There is a very small amount of story that only appears right at the end of the game, though is hinted at throughout. It feels like a kind of ARG built into the game, though the whole thing is so short that there isn't enough to really pontificate on more. Outside of the main levels, you can generate custom levels though they are

reasonably limited, with only a few options for each setting.

Asteroids Minesweeper is a very simple game that honestly feels more like a proof of concept. What is there is fun, but there's not a huge amount if you're looking for hand-

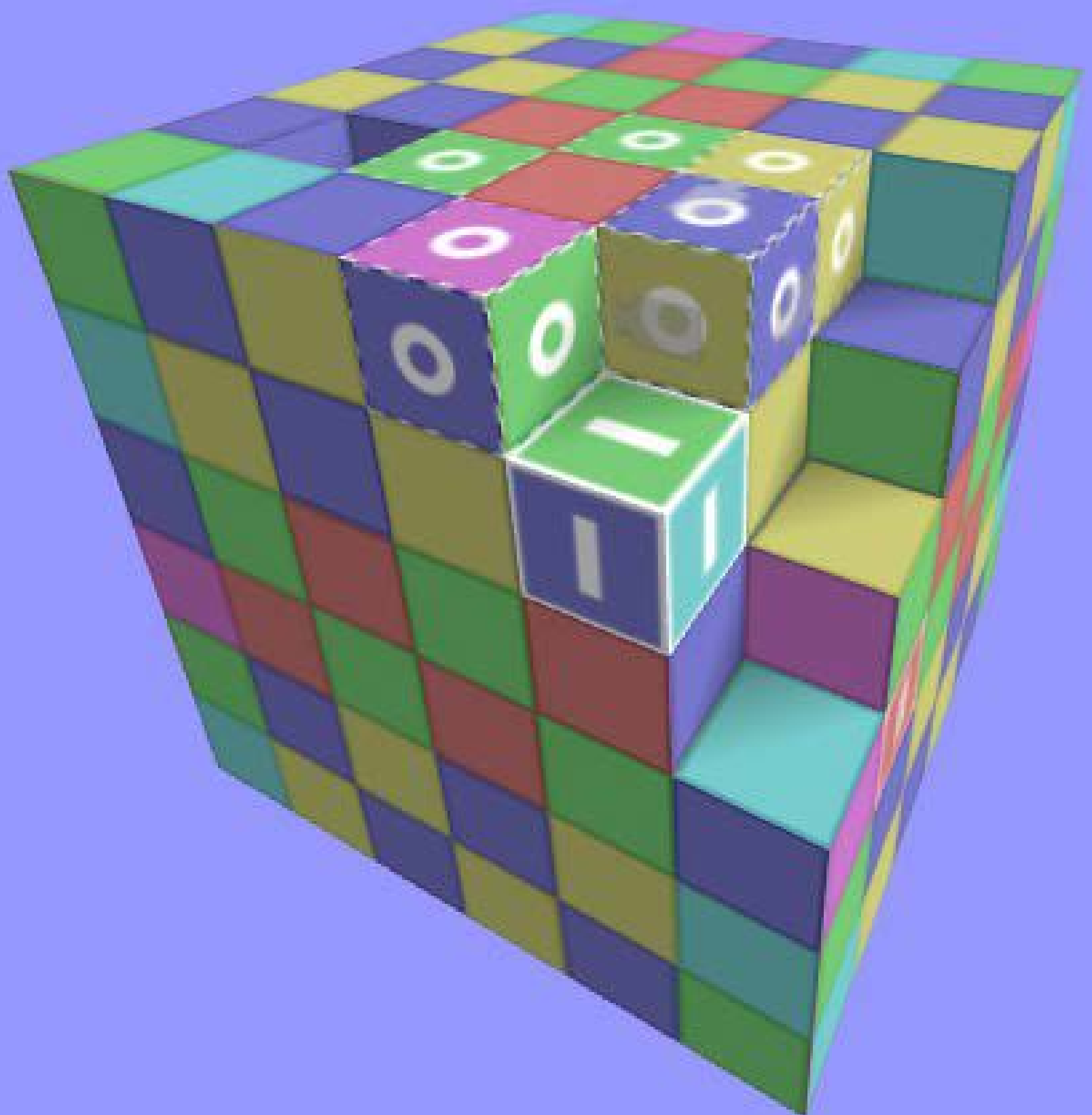
crafted puzzles. The addition of modifiers adds a lot to the game but they really only serve to make it all easier, which isn't necessarily what you'd want. The soundtrack is great, a fantastic calming affair that lets you keep your head once the mistakes start occurring. ■





204 other cubes

3 tries left





### Lovely Planet Arcade Review

**Publisher:** tinyBuild Games

**Developer:** QUICKTEQUILA

**Genre:** Action

**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By TheSphericalCat*



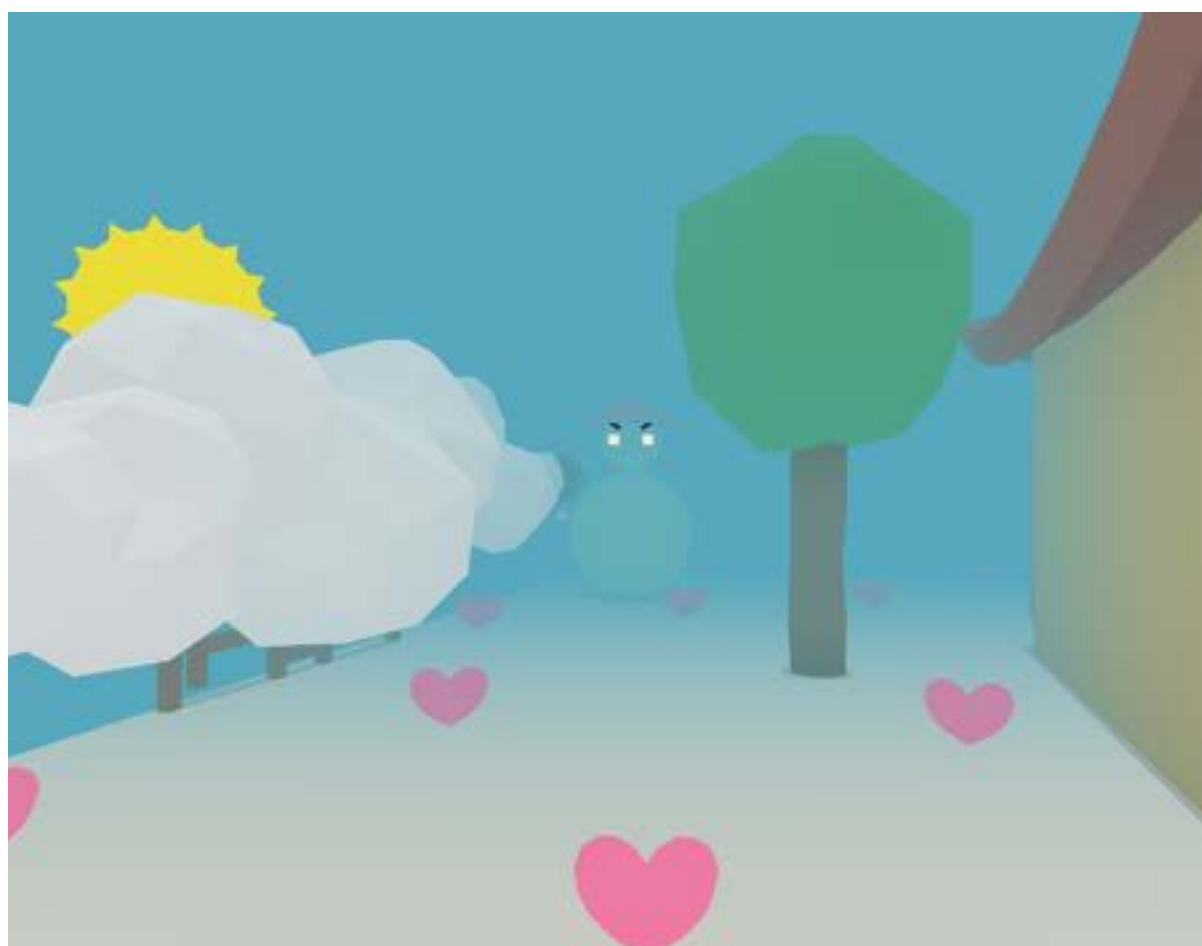
There's an unwritten rule of time trial games that allows them to tiptoe along the line between frustrating and satisfying. The difficulty needs to be consistent with new mechanics brought in to challenge the player by making them consider alternate routes. Lovely Planet Arcade does not do this, and it's attempts to tiptoe the line make it fall directly into rage-inducing.

Instead of introducing new mechanics to build on top of old ones, Lovely Planet Arcade cherry picks its mechanics for each level and effectively forces you to down a specific route. This - for me at least - robs me of a lot of the fun of finding the fastest route, since the fastest is so obviously signposted, either by impassable barriers or time-sensitive enemies.

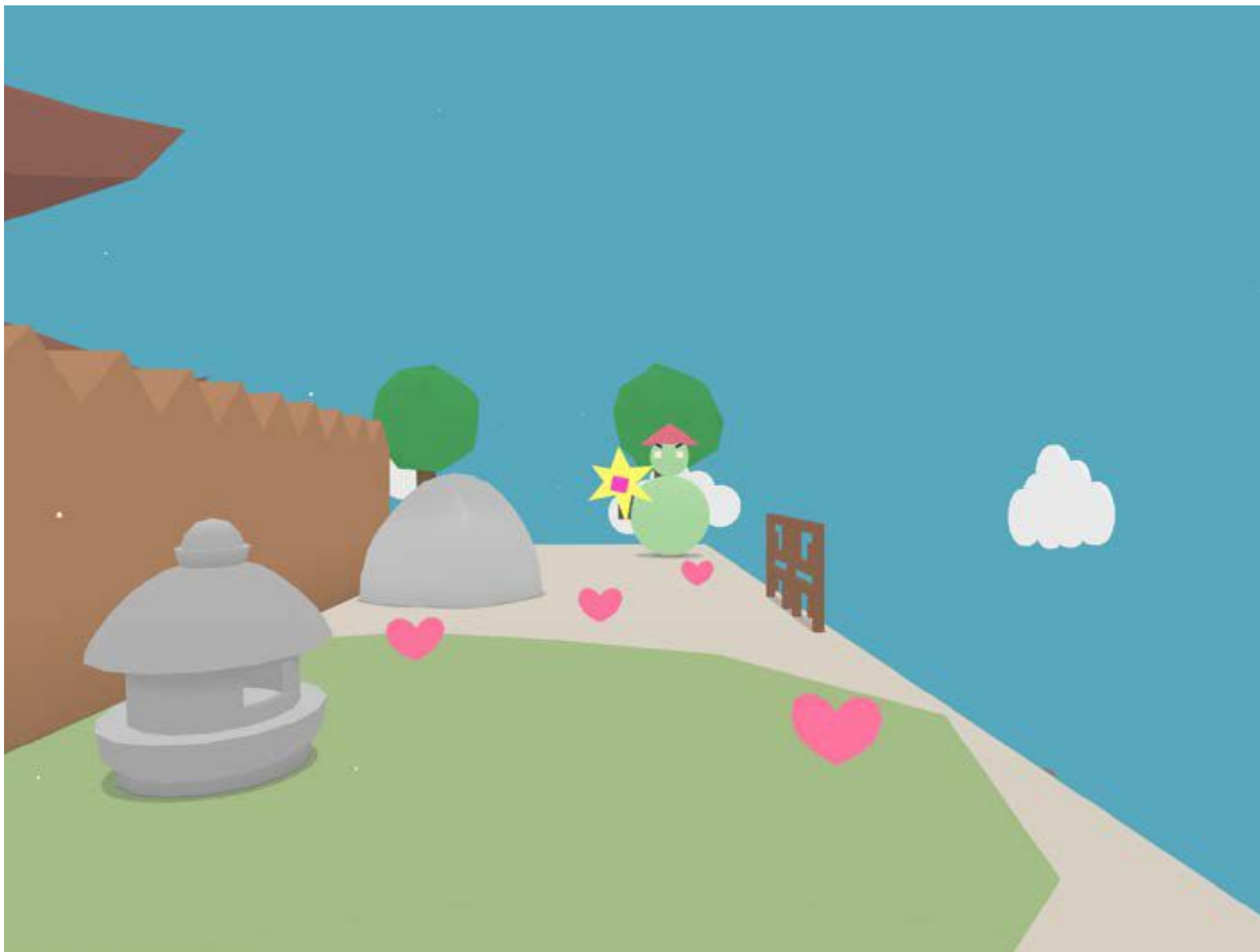
As with Lovely Planet, you play as a faceless being with a scatter gun who has to shoot the bulbous enemies, but the aesthetic is where the similarities end. Gone is the verticality of Lovely Planet, replaced instead by a Wolfenstein 3D style locked vertical camera view - you can't look up or down. You

can jump, but it's a method for dealing with a specific enemy type and can't get you over any of the low terrain.

The different enemies all look the same, except for an insignia on their chest that signifies what will happen when you shoot them. If they have nothing, nothing will happen obviously.







The enemies sporting a dot on their chests will temporarily freeze time, stopping you from being able to move but allowing you to aim and shoot and the otherwise frozen enemies. Those with a spiral will teleport you to their location after a similar time freeze. An X will make you blind until you interact with something else, either shooting another enemy or collecting a coin. Those with a heart can't make up their minds what they'll do, ranging

from immediately ending the level to being invincible.

The early levels are all exceptionally easy: Lovely Planet Arcade ranks your time with three stars and I got all three stars on the first chapter of levels, often on my first attempt. The later chapters start increasing the variety of enemies and increasingly feel more and more unfair until I reached a point in the fourth and final chapter of the game

that I couldn't complete a level. Because you die in one hit, I cannot see how to complete some of the levels in the game with the tools the game has given me. Too often, an invincible enemy will spawn with the gun that just needs to fire in vaguely your direction to instantly end that run.

Fortunately, you can restart levels instantly: The level's small size and simple appearance mean that there are no loading





times between resets. This led to me repeatedly throwing myself against the same obstacle and getting increasingly frustrated that the only path required such precise timing to pull off that it was next to impossible. Having the power-ups on the enemies meant I wasted so much time creating muscle memory to be able to make perfectly timed shots practically - or literally - blind.

This is where Lovely Planet Arcade loses me, because I didn't find it satisfying. The whole appeal for me to play time trials is the relief, the satisfaction, of beating a difficult

time, of perfecting a path. The early levels were too easy to be satisfying, the later levels were too reliant on trial and error and repeating a run until it legitimately was perfect that I was too annoyed to feel relieved that I'd completed it. Instead of manipulating the game and its mechanics to improve my times, the level design was using the mechanics to stop the player going off track.

Lovely Planet Arcade is what happens when you create something in a genre you've not understood, which is strange considering the team got it so right only two years ago. I found it too frustrating and really haven't enjoyed my time with it, which is a shame because it could have been so much better. ■









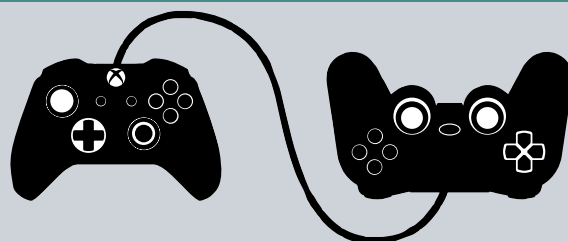
### Metrico+ Review

**Publisher:** Digital Dreams V.O.F.

**Developer:** Digital Dreams V.O.F.

**Genre:** Adventure

**Platform:** PC, PS4, Xbox One



**Release Dates**

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Thomas Hughes*



I have a odd relationship with puzzle games, sometimes it can be the worst genre I've ever played, whilst another day it will be one of my favourites. This is usually down to how different a lot of puzzle games are, there isn't the same level of homogeneity as you'd find in the FPS genre. Luckily Metrico+ falls on the good side of puzzle games, blending a

mix of creative puzzle solving, with forward thinking controls.

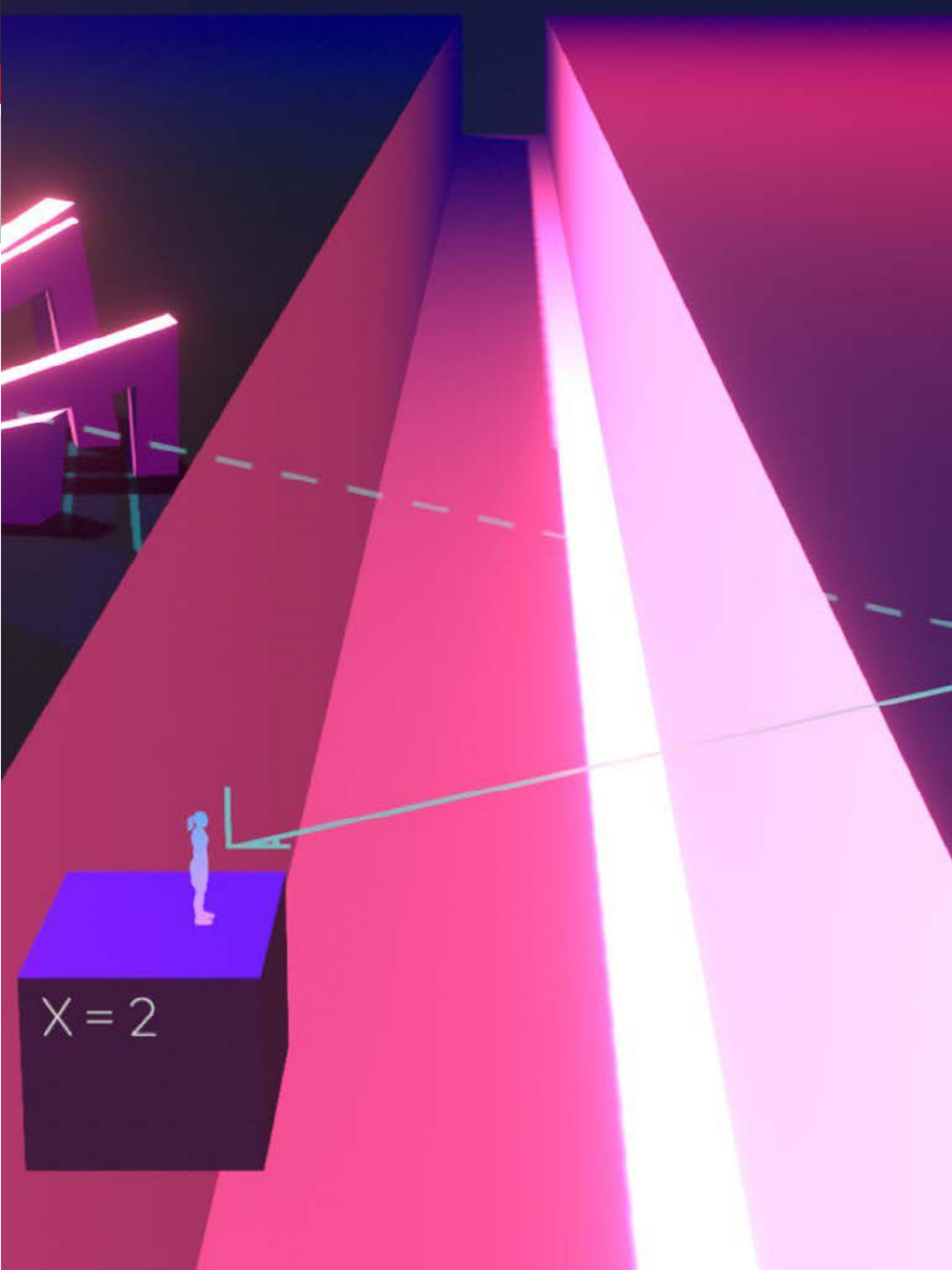
Metrico+ is developed by Digital Dreams, having had a reasonable amount of success with the PS Vita and PC, the game has now been ported to the PS4 and Xbox One. We'll be reviewing PS4 copy of the game, looking at how the game has improved whilst still reviewing

it on it's own merits (I haven't played the other versions so this is a fresh experience for me)

Right from the start, the game's visuals are pretty striking. Devoid of minor details, everything is presented in a simple shape like manner; there's a specific reason for this. The game's unique selling point is it's art design, everything







$X=2$



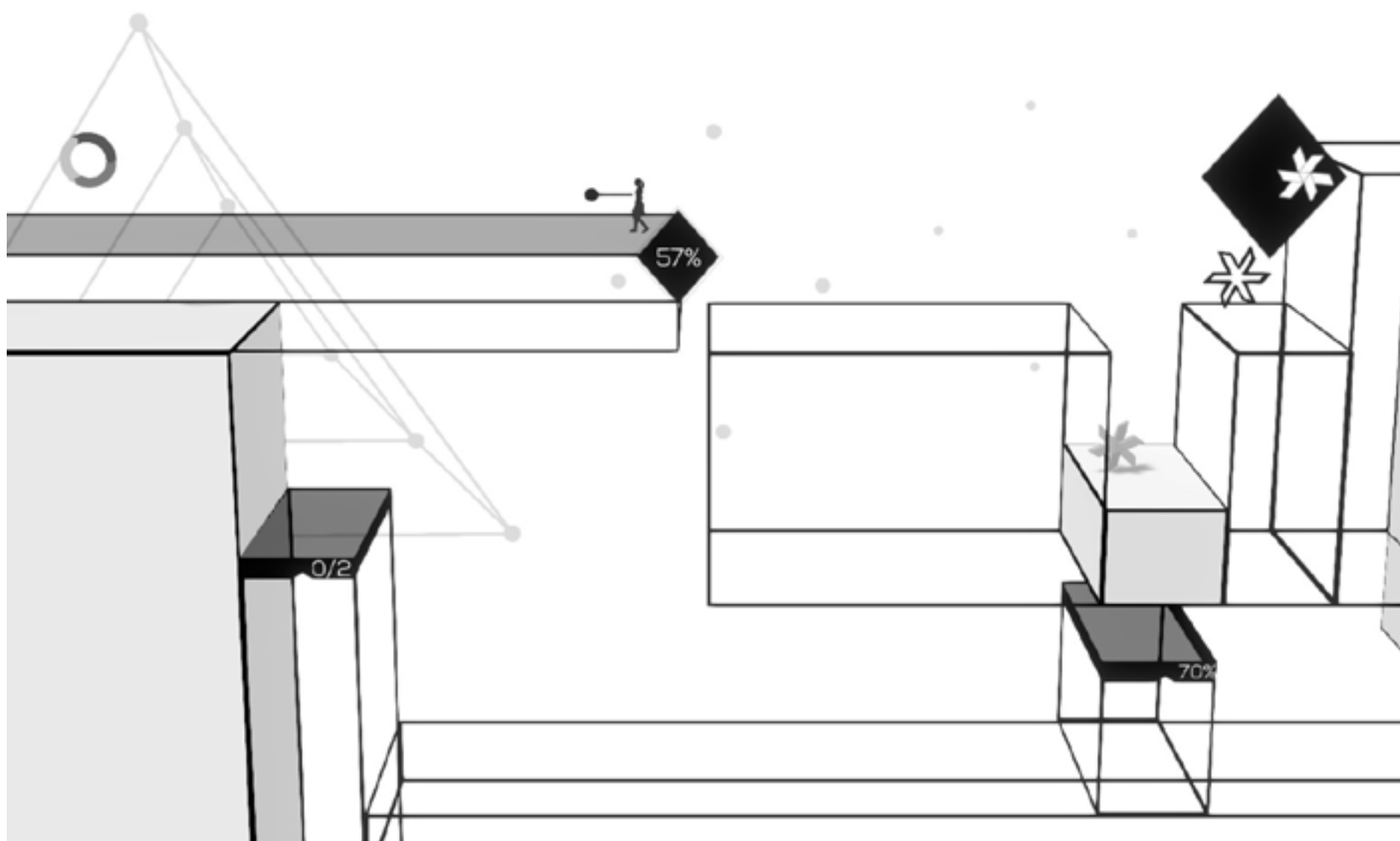
has been created to look like an infographic. What is an infographic you ask? They are information presented in a visual format, usually graphs or pie charts. The government likes to use them when trying to make studies more digestible. So the game essentially has you travelling through levels shaped like infographics, whilst trying to figure out the puzzles.

The puzzles in Metrico+ are excellently thought through, they are purposely designed in a way that makes them seem

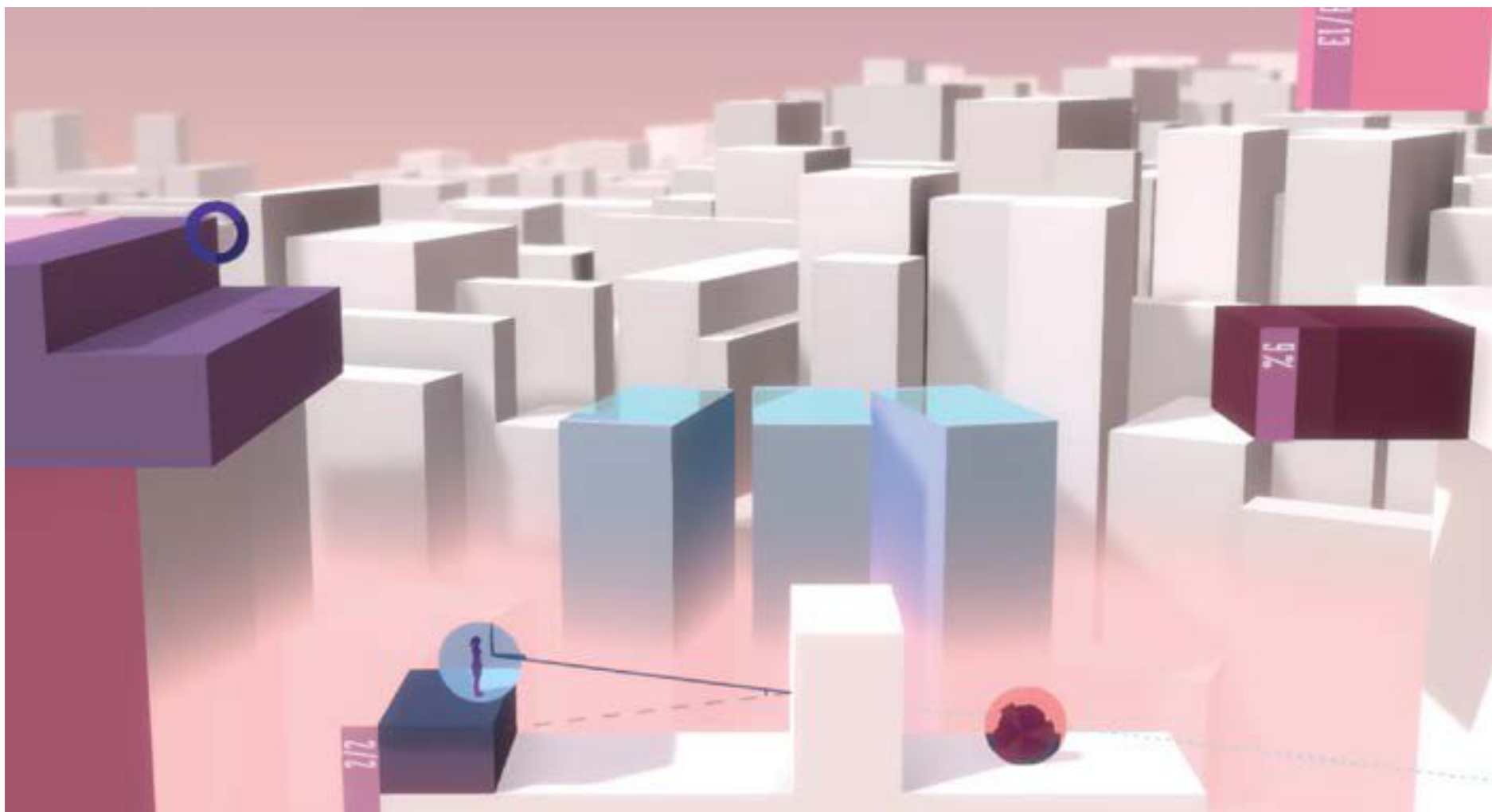
really illogical at first glance. After a few minutes of thinking about it the answer is suddenly quite obvious, but it often requires you to think outside the box. It reminded me of The Witness and how it made you really question how you've been programmed play games, forcing you out of your comfort zone to solve puzzles. Levels are designed in a way that can be played by both budding puzzle enthusiasts and those who enjoy platforming games. It's honestly quite impressive how they've managed to

weave the two together, this obviously limits the complexity, but manages to make the gameplay more enjoyable.

Each level earns you a new upgrade, a new tool that can be used to solve puzzles. This leaves each level feeling like a new playground to explore, giving your mind an extra layer of processing to deal with. It feels like each upgrade has been meticulously thought out, every single one of them can stand on their own as a gameplay element, but they







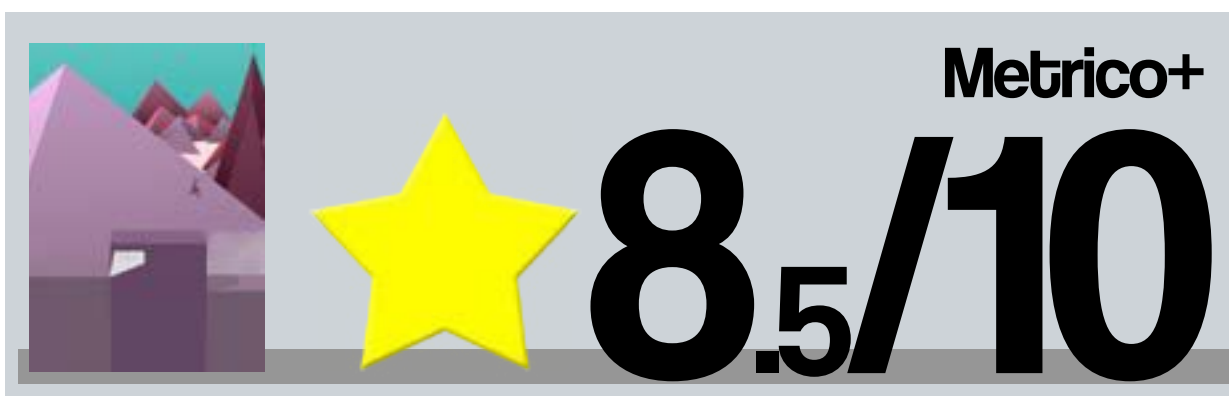
also manage to work excellent together. It's these touches that show just how well Metrico+ has been developed.

Those expecting a narrative will likely be disappointed, there is one in the game but it's quite abstract and vague. You kind of make of it what you will, I interpreted it as the protagonist going on a journey, and as he progresses the new upgrades slowly turn him into a machine. For me it's a metaphor for how much we are all willing to sacrifice in order to progress, but as I previously stated, it's pretty vague so it could literally mean anything.

Sound design is always important to me, and Metrico+ does not disappoint. While everything does sound like it's been created in an 808 synth, it compliments the game's visuals perfectly. All the noises have been designed to be pleasantly satisfying, adding to the game's overall relaxing aesthetic.

Sound design, visual design and gameplay have all been meticulously crafted

to provide one of the most unique experiences available on console and PC alike. The PS4 version improves on what was already a well received title, adding more content, updated visuals and minor tweaks all over the place. Metrico+ will push your brain out of it's comfort zone ,but you'll feel totally awesome when you figure it out. ■





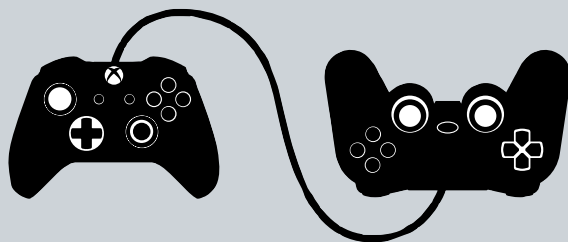
### Road to Ballhalla Review

**Publisher:** tinyBuild Games

**Developer:** Torched Hill

**Genre:** Racing

**Platform:** PC



Release Dates

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By TheSphericalCat*



**R**oad to Ballhalla is a ball-rolling maze game set in a stylized neon vacuum accompanied by a fabulous techno soundtrack. There are different types of levels: puzzle, rhythm and speed levels require a different - yet similar - set of skills to complete. The puzzle levels require resource management and timing, the rhythm levels are easy when you can hold the beat and speed levels require precision under pressure.

The puzzle levels revolve around a special type of square: a blue square which instantly kills you if you roll over it. These can be disarmed by blue pellets that exist throughout the level, though all of this is reset when you touch a checkpoint. More than one of the levels required you to pixel-perfect miss a checkpoint to pass sections,

which is infuriating because it goes against everything I've learnt as a gamer.

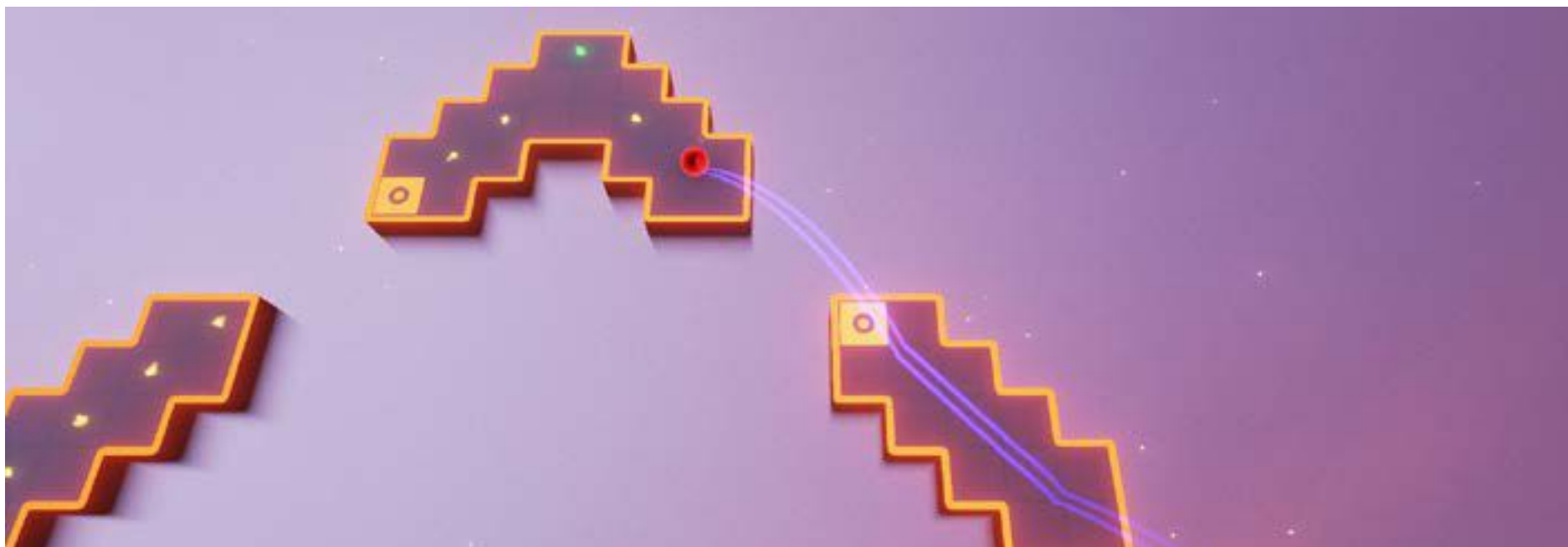
The speed levels are the hardest, and usually involve making extremely precise movements in very little time. A couple feature a big red ball chasing you throughout the level - collision is instant death naturally. All of the levels feature a much higher

number of deaths on my save file, mainly because I panic and jump off the levels instead of getting squashed by a giant rolling ball.

The rhythm levels make use of the excellent soundtrack and the main obstacles of the piece: red glowing squares. When lit, these burn your health away, and the rhythm levels will have them flash in time to the music.







These are actually surprisingly easy levels - for me at least - since once you have the pattern it takes a big mistake to mess up the level. That, or the level decides to mess with you.

As previously mentioned, Road to Ballhalla is narrated by sarcastic text which likes to mess with you. In the very first part of the tutorial, it shows it's true colours by telling you to avoid the red laser, then immediately exploding you with said red laser with a sassy message. This is unavoidable if you want to continue, and it sets a tone that is continued throughout the game. It's hard to discern when to trust the text, for sometimes it is trolling you and other times it is saving your time.

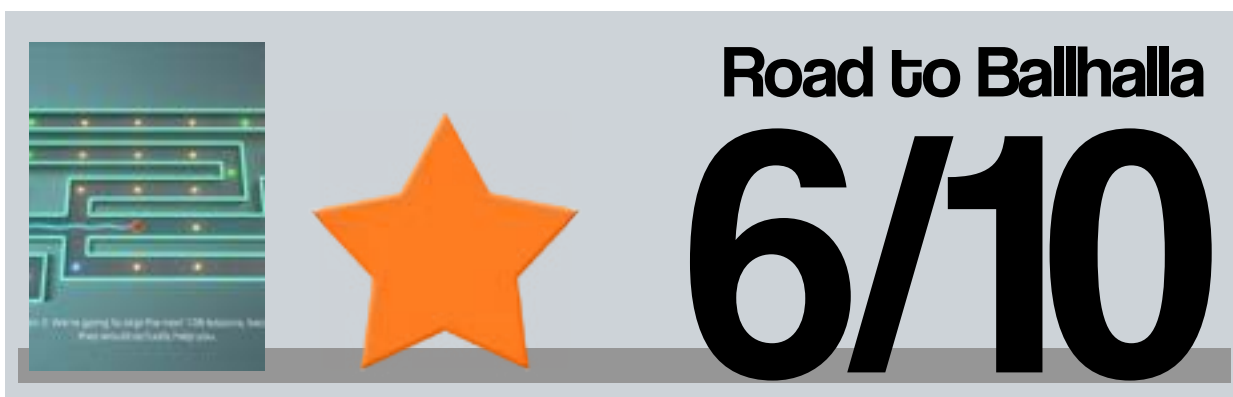
Each level has two sets of additional objectives which

reward you with stars at the end: the first is number of deaths per level (less than two is usually enough for full stars) and the second is a collectible count. Each level has Pacman-style pellets that you can collect, and collecting all of them rewards you with all the stars, though some of them can be very hard to reach.

There is also a map editor that launches separately from the game, and Steam Workshop support. There are already some very good levels that have certainly added many hours of additional gameplay, and the creator tools are very

easy to use but feel like the tool that the developers used to make the actual game levels.

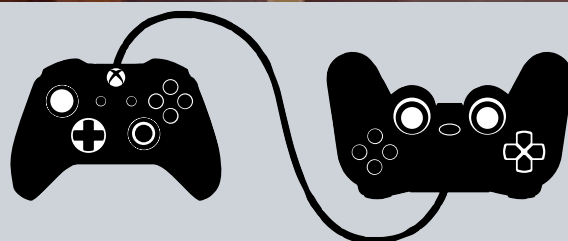
I enjoyed my time with Road to Ballhalla, but I think it's very flawed: The levels are grouped into chapters, but the level could be any of the three types. This makes the game's difficulty very inconsistent, and you can go from level to level without any real sense of achievement or improvement. Coupled with an inability to skip levels, I found myself stuck on some levels for a long time and getting very frustrated at the game after breezing through the previous level. ■





### Talent Not Included Review

**Publisher:** Frima Studio  
**Developer:** Frima Studio  
**Genre:** Action  
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Nerd House*



**T**alent Not Included is an action platformer with a small twist: it's all on stage! There's only one other game with such a premise that I am aware of, and that's Battleblock Theater. Talent Not Included has a lot of similarities, but the one that stands out the most is the way the scene constantly shifts. It's also harder than it looks. It's very simple at first glance, but the further you get the more complex and

difficult it becomes. It's a very fun game to whittle away a few evenings with. I was actually surprised with how much fun it was...I booted it up the very first time, played for 3 hours, wound up being 2 hours late for work, but in the end I just called out "sick" so I could play more! Please don't tell my boss...

As a platformer, you have some basic controls and actions you have access to. Jumping,

attacking, and a dodge type move, depending on the character you are currently playing with. To begin with, you only have the Knights to play, but after you progress to a certain stage the next character (the Rogue) is unlocked. The game is divided into Acts, and each act focuses on a specific character. Act One is strictly for the Knight, Act 2 is for the Rogue, and Act 3 is for the Mage. Each act consists







of many scenes, and in each scene it's your goal to play it out until you can reach the red platform, ending the scene. There isn't much in the way of story here, but each character has a small motivation to keep them moving forward. For example, the Knight is on a quest to obtain a better helmet!

The scenery shifting is really interesting. The floor of the stage is set up on a wheel-like

device, and it will rotate set pieces up and down onto the stage. At the start of each scene, you will have the first set piece up, and as you traverse that piece and reach the "rotate" pick up, the scene will shift to the next set piece. You continue in this fashion many times per scene until you reach the red platform at the end, completing the scene. Along the way, small, bright candies will appear and guide you on a "suggested

path" in most scenes, but in some set pieces they are simply stationary and begging to be picked up. As you play each stage and collect candies, you accumulate a larger and larger score. At the end of the scene, you are graded on the amount of points you accrued. The points don't really matter for anything, except self-satisfaction. If you want to maximize the amount of points you earn you can, but the game









doesn't set any point milestones to unlock anything further... which I believe may have been a missed opportunity.

The game looks good for what it is, and everything is well animated. It has a fresh, clean look that's easy on the eyes, and most of your objectives are very colorful and easy to discern. Traps are highlighted with red and white, while enemies have health dots displayed over their heads, indicating the amount of attacks needed to defeat them. Each set piece is pretty detailed, often using the floor for obstacles or hazards. Sometimes the floor looks like a bright red, rugged texture, indicating lava. The floor will also raise and lower, and you can sort of see the gears and cogs that operate it.

The game features a very light soundtrack, often upbeat and happy sounding. It matches the stage theme very nicely. Your character will grunt every time they jump, which is a nice detail but it gets a little annoying after awhile. Weapons swings sound good, and weapon clashes with enemies sound great as well. There isn't much else here, except for a little jingle when you pickup candies and when the set piece shifts. The game ran beautifully on my mid tier PC build, with no lag, stuttering, or frame drops. Perfect 60 FPS across the

board. My controller worked by default, no fiddling with settings was required. Good news for controller users indeed.

Talent Not Included is a great way to pass an afternoon or evening, with simple mechanics that appeal to players of all ages and skill levels. The challenge does ramp up as you go, but it shouldn't be too difficult for most players. I definitely recommend this game if you like platformers, and are looking for something new and fun to try out. ■



**Talent Not Included**

**8/10**



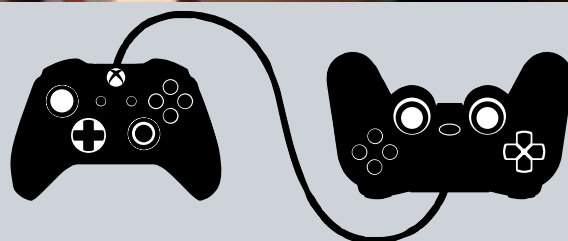
### God Eater 2 Rage Burst Review

**Publisher:** BANDAI NAMCO

**Developer:** BANDAI NAMCO

**Genre:** RPG

**Platform:** PC, PS4



Release Dates

Out Now (Worldwide)

*By Owen Chan*



**G**od Eater 2 Rage Burst (GE2RB) is quite possibly the next best thing we'll get to having Monster Hunter on the PC (unless you play in China), but then that's only because of the monster behemoths of boss like proportion monsters you hunt down make better and

cooler weapons which you'll expand over time. Really, this a game which is such a stand out for not being too Japanese for a role playing game.

Recently transferred to Blood, an elite taskforce meant to deal with the all consuming plague of Aragami that seek to devour the

remaining humans alive. You act as the vice captain under Julius, leading your slightly ragtag squad of Nana, Romeo, Gilbert and Ciel to defend reaming human settlements referred as Branches and Satellites. Operating under Friar a subsection of Fenrir, you face the plight of new







Aragami threat in the form of the red nimbus and the all consuming Black Plague.

From the get go the game gives you a simple but effective tutorial that opens up the core mechanics of the game as well the core premise: hitting things hard and fast until it dies. Once the tutorial's done, the game's difficulty doesn't amp up or be a dulcet slog but keeps a nice pace allowing you to adjust and change weapons to suit your playstyle with the six weapon types: Short Blade, Long Blade, Buster Blade, Boost Hammer, Charge Spear and (the newest weapon) Variant Scythe. Along with your ranged weapon in the form of Sniper Gun, Assault

Gun, Blast Gun and Shotgun type guns. I indulged myself with the Short Blade since I enjoyed the short bursts of combos and rapid fire approach of the Assault Gun, but having tried the different weapons and combinations there's bound to be a playstyle that will suit your needs.

The core meat of the gameplay is fast paced and depending on the play style will depend on the skill level required to be really effective in battle with precise and concise strikes being the toughest but rewards with higher damage output. By quite a stretch, GE2RB is really forgiving towards the player with the ability to have a squad

a quick respawn if you are to fall, the game pushes you back into the core combat with little hesitation. From the looks of it allowing you to effectively respawn 10 times with each squad member being able to do the same. This works both ways, but for the main story component this can make certain fights feel trivial and whilst your squad members don't deal significant damage to the enemy, their support can prove advantageous with stunning, trapping and healing when your health runs low.

But what makes a great JRPG is music, writing and characters; GE2RB delivers on these fronts thereabouts, slightly



## God Eater 2 Rage Burst

meandering at certain points. The writing is really solid, doing what it needs to help propel the plot forward (ahem). I won't get into it too deeply, but the writing definitely gave me the odd surprise here and there with how it's progressing. This is really helped with the characters in GE2RB being unique in their own rights and whilst at times come off really corny with some of the writing. It doesn't help that when parts of the story isn't voice acted when you expect it to really throw out my immersion and that some of the voice acting (whilst really solid and for the most part pretty faultless from the main cast),

it takes some cringy phases that make me wish that the Japanese voice was included to help stop some these elements by removing certain accents.

Whilst the main cast is great and the chemistry of the writing is good, at points it felt off with the odd translation not quite blending in or the phrasing missing the mark. Of course as far as translations go, it didn't seem incredibly egregious and if there was any censoring of content it doesn't seem like there was any. But that doesn't mean it doesn't suffer at times with the voice acting, being hit and miss at points with the

support cast. Really though, having sat through a lot of bad Anime dubs, this is by far one of the best English voice I heard.

And now the music, just solid. It's not a stand out you've got to listen to this when you're not playing the game, but when the moments hit, they really hit. But what undersells the music though is consistency of it playing, in the middle of combat the music might fade out and stop playing despite still engaging a mid-sized Aragami, which has happened a few too many times. Audio balancing has a similar issue in general, featuring preset







audio levels, it can be hard to get the right sound balance especially considering that the background music can sometimes “overpower” information a squad member may inform you or just be plain irritating with the same tune on repeat for the most part.

Finally, the cracks in what is really an incredibly polished port/remaster of a PSP game. Adjustability of the game in terms of controls and audio/visual is slightly lackluster, the audio/visual being the more barren featuring: Screen Resolution, Refresh Rate, Fullscreen, V-Sync (which I recommend turned on to stop screen tearing), FXAA, Shadow Quality, Texture Filtering and Particle effects. I’m not one to complain usually, but the texture quality should

be included since when my laptop initially ran the game on my integrated graphics, changing the texture filtering didn’t do much along with dialling back all of the settings in increasing my frames per second apart from making it more stable. I make this a point since my Nvidia graphics weren’t running the game initially as the Nvidia control panel didn’t pick up GE2RB and required to be manually set to run on my 860m GPU.

Gameplay is partially a fault as well, whilst incredibly polished and integral to the

game. This is by no means a mechanics first kind of game where every single attack, dodge and shot is nuanced, the story is (for the most part) front and centre. Which isn’t helped by the repetitive nature of the combat and missions facing a lot of Ogretails and Zygotes with reskins, along with repeatedly hunting the same mid-sized to large monsters. Which is the one thing that makes it pale in comparison to Monster Hunter in terms of monster variations, also the ability to dress fashionably isn’t that big a wardrobe sadly. ■



### God Eater 2 Rage Burst



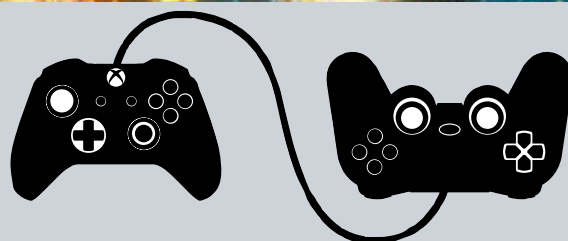
# 9.5/10



## Zombie City Defense 2

### Zombie City Defense 2 Review

**Publisher:** Mozg Labs  
**Developer:** Mozg Labs  
**Genre:** Strategy  
**Platform:** PC



**Release Dates**  
Out Now (Worldwide)

*By The\_Apothecary*



The flicker of blue light is all I see as my rifle squad pushes down the street, stopping only to fire off the occasional shot towards the incoming horde of undead as they scavenge and loot to their hearts content. The occasional survivor is sent back to base, ready to be recruited and trained into an effective combat or support role, everyone must

play their part if they want to survive the undead onslaught.

Straight into it, the game feels great, the art style really does give me the feeling of being a commander. Detached from the army and commanding them by using a satellite to navigate and devise a plan and figure out the best way to progress forward.

Zombie City Defence 2, however, is unfinished. It feels unfinished and it looks unfinished; the game is still fun, enjoyable and replayable even with the huge variety of difficulties and the large amount of units you can research such as my personal love interest; the shotgun squad. An unstoppable force of heavy armour and raw killing power







that can push down the street and lay waste to all of the low level zombies and slaughter them in their hundreds.

Regardless of how fun the game is, it is still lacking in some areas. You can feel that corners have been cut and the game has been pushed for an early release. Most buildings are labeled as simply “Small house” when they are clearly something other than that, I fail to see why a church could be considered a home.

Perhaps it was laziness, perhaps it was for simplicity, but every building that is named “Small

house” has the same resources in it over and over again. It takes away a whole risk for reward factor for me; you see that small house on the edge of the map? Right next to all the zombies? Let’s not loot that, as that small house right next to the base has the same amount of resources in every way.

I am fully aware that it sounds like I am giving the game a hard time for a few simple things, but the simple things build up over and over again! Once more, I can’t say how much I enjoyed the game but these repeated small issues frustrated me to no end. Another small

issue is the missions, whilst the missions are challenging and enjoyable they feel really damned repetitive. With zombie “Nests” spawning in the same locations, you can easily build a meta strategy for that mission which really hampers and damages replayability.

The game also seems to hint that future progress is most certainly going to continue, with the option to “pick your company” handed to you right at the start we can always hope that they intend to add more!

Also, base building needs improving... because there isn’t





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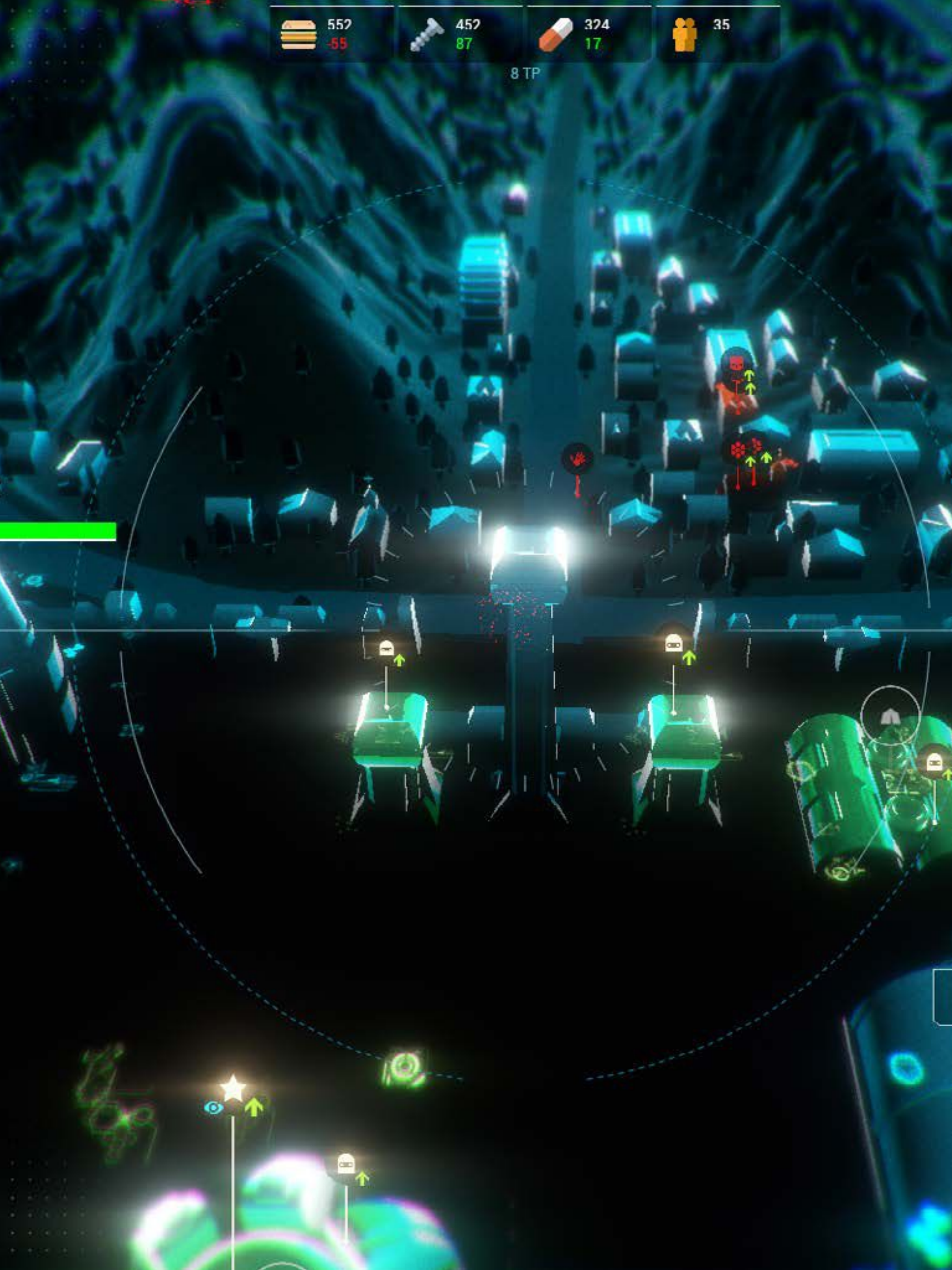


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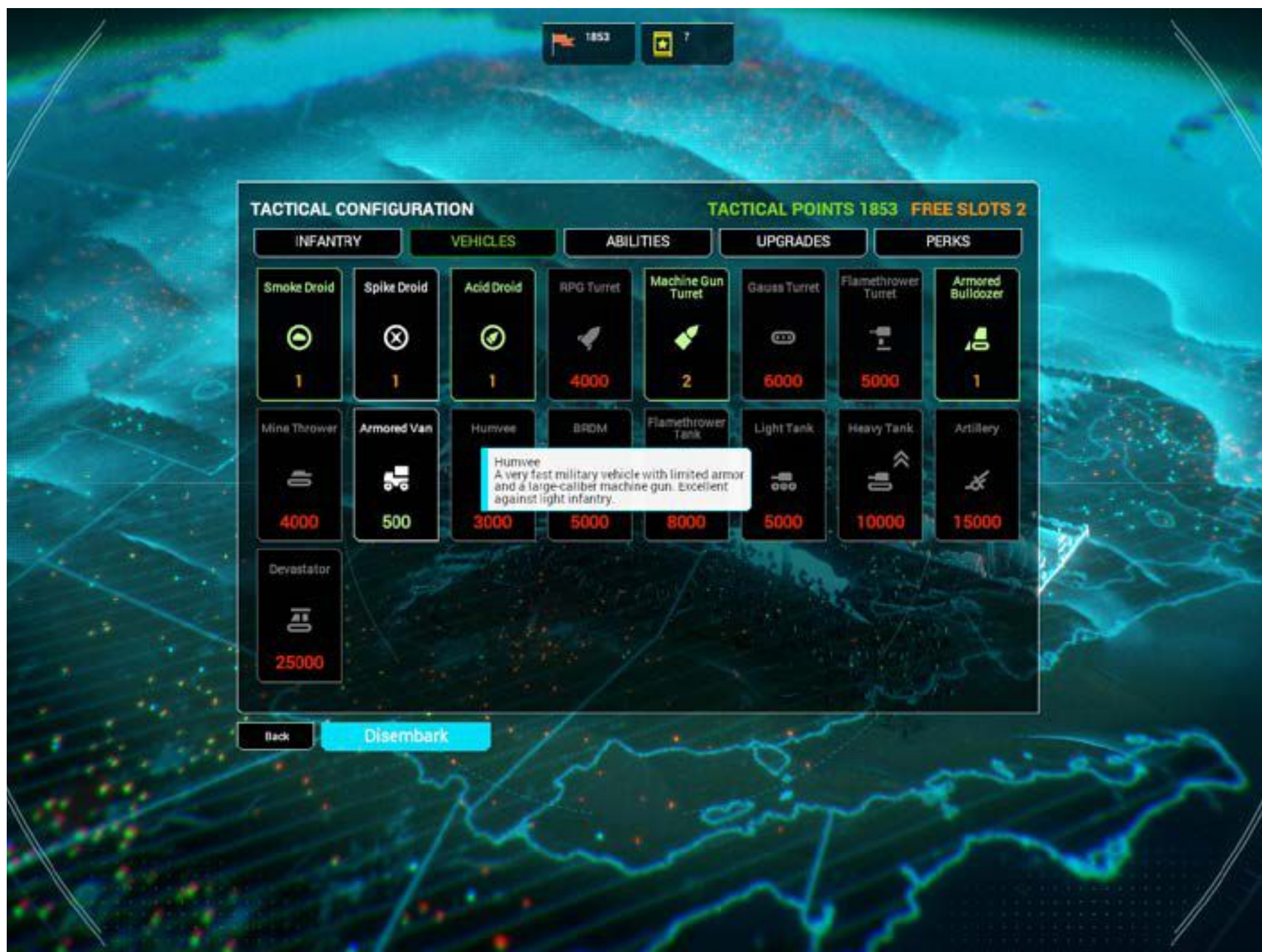


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any. I would love to be able to turn a house into an FOB for my units where they could heal and resupply, or maybe have to control a certain amount of houses to ensure my entire population can have shelter.

In conclusion the game itself is fantastic and the controls for your units is nice and simple, point and click and that is all! Spam those barricades for your main buildings and then you're set! Each mission does

have a tiny bit of individuality, mostly applied through various weather effects such as heat, rain and what time of day it is.

Once again, it seems that the little things drag down this otherwise enjoyable game. I

could happily sink more than a few hours into this title, perhaps more if they continue to improve the game!

P.S Devs; not everything is a small house!!!! ■



## Zombie City Defense 2

# 8/10





**Thanks for reading!  
See you next month!**